

III

The Rise (1925–1937).

I

NATIONAL-SOCIALISM

TAKES THE OFFENSIVE AGAIN

(20 December 1924–31 October 1930)

On 20 December 1924, Hitler was amnestied by the Bavarian government. His detention, which had begun on 12 November 1923, had lasted exactly thirteen months and seven days. “When I get out of here,” he declared to Rudolf Hess, “I shall need five years to take the Party back in hand.”

But the situation he finds on leaving prison is much worse than he had expected. Apart from Rudolf Hess, who shared his imprisonment, and a handful of faithful militants, his surest friends are dead or in exile: Göring, still under an arrest warrant, is in exile in Italy, where he is witnessing the rise of Mussolinian fascism; Rossbach has fled to Austria; Dietrich Eckart has succumbed to a heart attack a few weeks after his arrest.

As for the others, they have wanted to continue the work begun by Hitler, sometimes loyally, but sometimes also with the ulterior thought of becoming the leaders of the Movement themselves. They have founded some ten small racist parties which claim, more or less openly, to belong to National Socialism, while secretly seeking to remove its leader. Thus there arose in northern Germany the Deutschvölkische Freiheitspartei of von Graefe, Wulle, and Count Reventlow; in southern Germany, the Völkischer Block in Bayern, chaired by Gregor Strasser; finally, the National-Sozialistische Freiheitsbewegung, whose leaders for the Reich are Ludendorff, Gregor Strasser, and von Graefe.

[Footnote fragment in the text layer:] “When I came out of Landsberg,” Hitler would later say, “everything had disso—”

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These different parties, which form a rather loose coalition, seem at first to enjoy popular favor. In the elections of 4 May 1924 they receive 1,924,000 votes and send 32 deputies to the Reichstag, including 9 National Socialists. But behind this deceptive façade the greatest disorder reigns in the nationalist camp. Meeting in congress at Weimar on 16 and 17 August 1924, the rival groups are unable to agree on anything. Intrigue and personal ambitions set the faction leaders against one another. A few months later the movements in question are in full regression. In the elections of 7 December they have only 14 deputies left in the Reichstag, including 4 National Socialists.

“What narrow minds had destroyed in a year,” Joseph Goebbels would later write, “even a brilliant brain could not rebuild overnight. On every side one saw only ruins and debris. Many of the best militants had left the movement and stood aside, in discouraged resignation... The quarrels of the leaders had profoundly shaken the framework of the Party, and it seemed impossible to restore authority and discipline there. The crisis had a clearly personal character. What divided the groups was not differences of structure or doctrine: it was the fact that each of them rivaled the others in order to hoist its own man to the head of the Movement.”

Hitler is therefore faced with a most arduous task: he must reconstitute the unity of the Movement, take its leadership back in hand, and bring back into line all the bit players and sub-leaders who, during his imprisonment, have acquired a somewhat too lively taste for personal authority.

The new foundation of the Party takes place on 27 February in the hall of the Bürgerbräu. Four to five thousand people attend the meeting and give Hitler an enthusiastic reception. After reviewing the political situation and paying an emotional tribute to the dead of 9 November, the Führer exhorts—

[Retained footnotes]

2. The date originally chosen had been 24 February, the anniversary of the Party's first great meeting in 1920. But that year, 24 February fell on Shrove Tuesday, and the meeting had to be postponed by three days.

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—the rivals to bury their quarrels and unite their efforts, as they had done in the past. The session ends in a general reconciliation. Julius Streicher, Gottfried Feder, Hermann Esser, Dr. Frick, Rudolf Hess, Max Amann, and others gather around Hitler and swear to obey him with unconditional loyalty. The initial nucleus of the new N.S.D.A.P. is formed.

Ten days earlier, the National-Sozialistische Freiheitsbewegung had dissolved itself. Ludendorff, Gregor Strasser, and Graefe had resigned from the Directing Committee. Now the Grossdeutsche Volksgemeinschaft and the Völkischer Block in Bayern do the same. The four National-Socialist deputies in the Reichstag leave the Freiheitsbewegung in order to return into the bosom of the N.S.D.A.P.

Yet the Party's unity is still very precarious. No doubt Hitler has gathered around him a certain number of supporters. But they represent what is called the "Munich old guard," the small square of those who joined the Movement at the very beginning of its formation. He still has to impose his will on the groups of northern Germany that arose during his imprisonment and whose militants scarcely know him. He must also rally to himself some leaders less docile than the others and less disposed to abandon their personal prerogatives, such as Ernst Röhm and Gregor Strasser.

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What separates Röhm from Hitler is not a question of doctrine; it is a question of tactics. Röhm had served, before 1923, as liaison agent between the S.A. and the Reichswehr. He had played a preponderant role in the creation of the Kampfbund. Perhaps it was even he who decided Ludendorff to join the coalition; in any case, he kept excellent relations with the former First Quartermaster General. A soldier at heart and of undeniable bravery — was he not one of the first to enter Fort Vaux? — he regards "propaganda" as an invention of intellectuals, a dubious weapon which could in no case replace direct action.

[Retained footnotes]

1. Alfred Rosenberg is absent, but he has sent his adherence.

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Despite the failure of the coup d'état and his few weeks of imprisonment, he has remained what he formerly was: a desperado, a condottiere who, to be happy, needs an atmosphere of tumult and illegality. While maintaining close contacts with the Reichswehr, he would never submit to the rigid disciplines imposed on its units by General von Seeckt.

On 4 May 1924 he was elected deputy to the Reichstag on the list of the Nationale Freiheitsbewegung; but the atmosphere of Parliament seemed unbreathable to him, and he was not long in returning to his favorite occupation: grouping around himself partisans, soldiers.

Conspiring, plotting, fomenting raids and insurrections — that, it seems, is his particular vocation. Sanguine and brawling, he believes only in the virtue of physical violence. After the forced exile of Rossbach in Austria, he regroups, with his friend Heines, the remnants of his Free Corps and seeks to amalgamate them with the S.A. still in existence. Then, on 30 May 1924, he founds a new association, the Frontbann, whose command he assumes and whose chief of staff Heines becomes. Thus Röhm appears to Hitler to be the man most clearly indicated to organize the new Assault Sections.

Röhm eagerly accepts this mission of confidence. But very quickly the disagreement breaks out between Hitler and him. Röhm, in fact, wants to incorporate the S.A. into the Frontbann, whose effectives would form, under Ludendorff's high patronage, the shock troops of the whole body of racialist parties.

Hitler, however, will not hear of this combination. He refuses to let the S.A. be transformed a second time into military formations, and this on behalf of a coalition of which he has no intention of being part. The leader of the National-Socialist Movement has taken advantage of his imprisonment to make his self-criticism. The failure of 9 November proved to him that the tactics employed were bad and that they had to be changed. It was no longer a question of forcing the Germans by force, but of convincing them by the idea. It was necessary not to seek to overthrow the State, but to penetrate it by legal methods, in order to make oneself master of it and transform it. It may be objected that Mussolini acted differently. But that proves nothing, except that he found himself facing other problems. A—

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—march on Berlin, modeled on the principles of the march on Rome, is unrealizable in Germany. First, the Reichswehr would oppose it with all its forces. Second, German unity would not withstand it: there would be an unleashing of separatist movements in Thuringia, Saxony, Bavaria, Westphalia...

Moreover, the situation is no longer the same as in 1923. The creation of the Rentenmark has consolidated the regime. The era of coups d'état is closed, and it must be reopened all the less because each of these attempts has ended in failure. A different tactic is required: to beat democracy with its own weapons and arrive at dictatorship thanks to universal suffrage.

“The instrument for the seizure of power is propaganda,” Hitler assures him. “It is through propaganda that we must gradually rally to ourselves all layers of the population and make of them an avalanche that will sweep away all obstacles. We must keep the nation in a state of permanent crisis and wrest, from election to election, ever more numerous seats in the Reichstag and in the assemblies of the Länder, until the National Socialists hold the majority there...”

“It will take years to get there,” Röhm objects.

“What does it matter?” Hitler replies. “Twenty years, perhaps a hundred years, may pass before our idea is victorious. Perhaps those who believe today in our mission will be dead when it triumphs. I myself am only a drum whose rolls prepare the coming of the one who will take power. Only one thing matters: final success. To turn aside from this path is to go toward failure...”

Röhm does not hide the little confidence inspired in him by this “new tactic.” He is not a Messiah working for eternity; he is a fighter who wants to enjoy quickly the fruits of his victory. But despite his objections, Hitler remains unshakable.

Discouraged by this discussion, Röhm decides to abandon the leadership of the S.A. as well as that of the Frontbann. In an open letter published on 1 May 1925 by the *Völkischer Beobachter*, he announces in a bitter tone that he is resigning his posts and definitively withdrawing from political life.

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Quite different is the nature of the disagreement separating Hitler from Gregor Strasser. A former pharmacy student, Strasser joined the Party as early as February 1921. Soon afterward at Landshut he founded the second Nazi group situated outside Munich. In January 1922 he became the leader of the S.A. of Lower Bavaria, and in that capacity he was charged by Göring with defending the Wittelsbach Bridge on the morning of 9 November. Arrested the very next day, he succeeded in getting himself elected deputy to the Prussian Landtag in April 1924, which forced the Bavarian authorities to release him.

Despite this rather military activity, Gregor Strasser has nothing of the soldier about him. He is an ideologue. Of clearly revolutionary opinions, he places himself on the extreme left of the Nazi Party, whose socialist tendencies he seeks to accentuate, for he formally disapproves of its collusion with reactionary circles.

His field of action is Berlin, where, with his brother Otto, he has acquired a bankrupt socialist newspaper, the *Berliner Arbeiter Zeitung*. Under his impulse the Sections of northern Germany rapidly became the best filled-out in the Party, and Gregor Strasser carved out for himself an enviable position among the political circles of the capital. Ambitious and energetic, leader of the *Freiheitsbewegung* in Berlin and president in Bavaria of the *Völkischer Block*, he sees very brilliant prospects opening before him and feels in no way inclined to give up his place to others.

Röhm, carried away by his fiery temperament, ended his discussion with Hitler in an outburst, whereas Strasser, more supple, avoids a rupture. After a few weeks of hesitation, the former leader of the *Freiheitspartei* finally rallies to National Socialism. He bows — at least in appearance — before Hitler’s directives, and Hitler entrusts him, in October 1925, with the direction of the propaganda

service of the N.S.D.A.P.

While these discussions continue among the leaders, the Party slowly begins again to recruit adherents
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—not only in Bavaria, but in all regions of the Reich. At the end of 1925 it has twenty-seven thousand members distributed among twenty-three regions (Gau), each having its Assault Section.

However, Strasser, who has maintained his headquarters in Berlin, continues to act as though the Sections of northern Germany depended only on him, and applies the Führer's directives only reluctantly. Thus there is created in the capital a kind of front against the "Munich clique," reactionary and deviationist, which is accused of understanding nothing about the situation. Hitler decides to cut short this tendency, for if it continues it risks creating a split within the Party.

An unfortunate initiative of Strasser gives him the pretext. Strasser has made common cause with the Socialists on the occasion of a referendum demanding the confiscation of all princely properties seized during the revolution. This decision is all the more serious because it risks embroiling the Party with monarchist circles and because it is contrary to its doctrine on the essential question of private property.

Hitler immediately summons a congress of Party leaders at Bamberg in Bavaria. The meeting takes place on 14 February 1926. The Führer grows indignant against "the hypocrisy of those who ally themselves with the Marxists, when one of the Party's first aims is to expel them from the country," and violently stigmatizes "those who confuse propaganda with demagoguery, in the hope of rallying a fraction of the working class." As he develops his arguments, his hearers, most of whom come from southern Germany, understand that his attacks are aimed at Strasser's initiative and show him their approval by sustained applause.

Strasser has not come to the congress, knowing very well that he will be put on trial there. In his place he has sent one of his best collaborators, who until now has played only an unobtrusive role, but whose influence in the Party will continue to grow: Dr. Joseph Goebbels.

What Strasser has done in northern Germany, Goebbels has accomplished in the Rhineland and in the Ruhr. Born at Rheydt—

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—on 29 October 1896, a member of the N.S.D.A.P. since 1922, he nevertheless did not take part in the putsch of 9 November.

It is at Heidelberg that he displays his activity, then at Cologne, where he very quickly distinguishes himself by his qualities as an agitator. Expelled from the Rhineland by the Allied authorities, he settled at Elberfeld in the Ruhr, where in 1924 he took over the direction of a newspaper, the *Völkische Freiheit*. He introduced racialist ideas into working-class circles and laid, with Captain von Pfeffer, the

foundations of what would later become one of the Party's most flourishing sections.

Like Strasser, Goebbels is an intellectual, but his formation is literary rather than scientific. Consumed by intelligence, his hollow cheeks, his dark complexion, his dark and mobile eyes, set deep under the brow ridge, give him a type more Mediterranean than Nordic. His enemies accuse him of combining the fanaticism of Savonarola with the cynicism of Machiavelli, which is not entirely false. For this incomparable polemicist knows how to be, when he wants, a diplomat and a calculator. A few seconds are enough for him to pass from fury to sarcasm and from invective to joking. If he does not have Strasser's doctrinaire rigor, he possesses, on the other hand, a bite and liveliness of mind of which Strasser, for his part, is totally deprived.

Stricken with osteomyelitis at the age of seven, he had to undergo a serious operation on his hip, from which he emerged with a shortening of ten centimeters in his right leg. Since then he has been obliged to wear special shoes and orthopedic suspenders. His classmates mocked him and called him "clubfoot." He accepted this epithet without ever denying it, because it flatters his pride. Does it not associate him with certain great limping men of history — with Talleyrand, Byron, Mephisto, or again with those deformed figures of ancient legends who forged weapons for warriors and demigods? But deep within himself he suffered greatly from it. Declared unfit for military service, he will never be the hero he had dreamed of being. He wept with sadness on 1 August 1914, seeing the trains filled with soldiers crossing the bridges of the Rhine with a roar, en route for the western front. He suffered still more, after the defeat, from being unable to take part in the action of the Free Corps. The complex of frustration gnawing at him is equaled only by his thirst for domination. It is this—

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—that incites him to want to compensate for his physical inferiority by an intellectual superiority that will allow him to crush all those who despise him. For Goebbels has discovered, at the bottom of his humiliation, a weapon more effective than all those his puny body forbids him to handle, more terrible than the loaded mouth of a cannon: propaganda. This "intellectual strategy," as he calls it, is not only capable of modifying opinions; it can shatter reality in order to substitute for it a different reality, provided it is given a sufficient degree of intensity.

Now Goebbels will not merely give it "a sufficient degree of intensity"; he will carry it to a paroxysm never reached before him. Appealing to the most primitive reflexes of collective psychology, he will learn to knead and stir the crowds, to impose on them a kind of collective hypnosis, to hurl them like torrents toward the objectives he assigns them. He will organize mass demonstrations, monster parades, torchlight retreats that will streak the German nights with their long trails of fire. An indefatigable worker, finding every day a thousand new ideas, handling like an orchestra conductor the press, radio, theater, and cinema, he will invent hundreds of slogans, some of which will remain famous: "One people, one Reich, one Führer!" — "The Germans will always prefer guns to butter!" — "Strength through Joy." — "Let all wheels turn for victory!"

But at this time he is still only a little unknown intellectual, whose manuscripts most publishers have refused and who is feverishly seeking his path — that is to say, the cause to which he will bring his sharp intelligence and his frenzied passions.

One evening in February 1921, his steps led him to the Krone circus in Munich, where a new

nationalist party had organized a meeting. A certain Adolf Hitler was to speak there. He had never seen him before. All he knew of him was that some considered him “a very gifted political man.” But as soon as Goebbels hears him, he receives a shock comparable to that felt by Alfred Rosenberg. Let us listen to what he tells us about that memorable evening:

“Nearly eight thousand people were gathered in the hall. The crowd was amorphous, somnolent, as if asleep. Suddenly, without having attracted attention, someone—

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—stood up and began to speak, hesitantly and timidly at first, as though he were seeking the words perfectly appropriate to the expression of thoughts whose grandeur could not adapt itself to the narrow limits of ordinary language. Suddenly the speech conquered the audience. I was seized; I listened...

“The crowd woke up. A glow of hope lit up the gray, dull, haggard faces. At the back of the hall, someone stood up brandishing his fist. My neighbor opened his collar and wiped the sweat from his forehead. Near me, two seats away, to my left, an old officer wept like a child. I was hot, then cold; I did not know what was happening to me. I had the impression that cannons were thundering... I was carried beyond myself and I shouted: ‘Hurrah!’ No one appeared astonished. The man speaking down there looked at me for a moment. His blue eyes, burning like a flame, crossed my gaze. It was a command!”

As soon as the session ended, Goebbels walked like a sleepwalker toward a table situated near the exit door. There they were taking the names of those who wished to enroll in the Movement. He filled out a form, handed it as in a dream to a Party functionary, and received in exchange a membership card bearing no. 8762.

That evening, Joseph Goebbels found his road to Damascus. He, the skeptic, eaten away by doubt, had met the man to whom he would devote boundless admiration, precisely because he was totally impervious to doubt, because he had an invincible faith in the victory of his Movement and, through it, in the resurrection of Germany.

In the fire of his first enthusiasm, he addressed an exalted letter to Hitler: “Like a rising star,” he wrote to him, “you appeared before our astonished eyes; you performed a miracle to enlighten our minds and, in a world of skepticism and despair, you gave us faith.”

But the failure of the Munich putsch seems destined to reduce all these hopes to nothing. Hitler has been put in prison, where he writes *Mein Kampf*. When the book appears, Goebbels reads it attentively and notes in his Journal:

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2. “This man is irresistible,” Goebbels writes in his Journal, “because he has faith, because he believes in what he says... The secret of his strength is his fanatical belief in his Movement and, through it, in Germany.”

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“14 October 1925: I have just finished reading Hitler’s book. I am more than enthusiastic. Who is this man? Half plebeian, half god? Christ or Saint John the Baptist?”

But despite his exalted offers of service, Hitler has not entrusted him with Propaganda in northern Germany. He preferred to entrust that task to that lumpish Strasser. Has the Führer therefore not recognized his talents? Or was he put off by his disturbing physique? Whatever the reason for his refusal, Goebbels was deeply mortified by it. Moreover, Strasser warned him against the disorganization and corruption reigning within the Munich party, against the mediocrity of the men forming Hitler’s entourage. Goebbels falls ill from it. Gnawing doubt slips into him again. Thus, when he arrives at the Bamberg Congress on 14 February 1926, he is animated by contradictory feelings: he oscillates between a muffled resentment toward Hitler, the fear of being the victim of his oratorical spells, and the dazzled memory of their first meeting.

But he has scarcely seen him again when he feels himself conquered anew. Even if Strasser’s criticisms are well founded, they could not prevail over this evident fact: the Party’s principal asset is Hitler himself. When he hears him speak, he experiences the same inexplicable feeling as at Munich: a fanatical adherence, more total than ever.

When the Führer has finished his exposition, Goebbels mounts the platform and gives Hitler right on the whole line. He declares that he will vote for the motion presented by the political bureau and adjures all the members of the Congress to follow his example. So burning are the terms of his peroration that the motion is adopted unanimously.

When he leaves Munich on 17 April, after having had several private conversations with Hitler, he is completely subjugated. Three days later (20 April), he addresses to him for his birthday this letter, strange to say the least:

Dear and honored Adolf Hitler,

I have learned so much from you! By your friendly attentions, you showed me entirely new paths, which—

[Retained footnotes]

1. Journal of Goebbels. — 21 August 1925: “Strasser tells many terrible things about Munich, the inefficient and corrupt organization. Hitler is badly surrounded.” — 26 September 1925: “The Munich Movement smells bad. I am completely disgusted by the Munich clique.” — 11 February 1926: “No one believes in Munich. Elberfeld will become the Mecca of German Socialism.”

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—finally made me see the light... The day may come when everything will shatter, when the crowd around you will foam, growl, and howl: “Crucify him!” But then we shall stand firm and without flinching; we shall cry and sing: “Hosannah!”

Goebbels's rallying sows disarray in the opposition of northern Germany. Having come as Strasser's spokesman, he has openly taken a position against him! Sensing the wind turning, von Graefe, leader of the Deutschvölkische Arbeiterpartei, hastens to offer his alliance to Hitler. But Hitler rejects this proposition with disdain.

"I do not believe," he had declared a few days earlier, "in the value of blocs, alliances, and coalitions, unless they proceed from a single leadership. It is for the strongest party to take the lead, or to give way to others."

Consequently, Mr. Graefe submits without conditions, and Count Reventlow is not long in doing the same.

Wishing immediately to exploit the victory he has just won, Hitler summons, on 26 May, the General Assembly of Party members. From the platform he rereads the 25 points of the program, drafted in 1921, which he declares to be the intangible Charter of the N.S.D.A.P. After this the vote is taken. Hitler is elected president unanimously. Yet this success is not enough for him:

"I accept this post," he declares, "but on one condition: I shall have to give account of my actions only to the members of the initial nucleus of Munich."

This demand amounts to the granting of full powers, for the Munich section is entirely devoted to him. Thus, seventeen months after leaving prison, having set aside the lukewarm, broken the opposition, and rallied the undecided, Hitler is once again dictator of the National-Socialist Party.

Until now, all these events have passed almost unnoticed by the general public. Now it is a question of striking imaginations and giving a brilliant manifestation of the Party's resurrection. For this, Hitler organizes at Weimar, on 3 and 4 July, the second National Congress, or Reich Party Day—

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—Six thousand S.A. in brown shirts march past him. At the end of the parade, Hitler hands over eight new standards to the Assault Sections. This handing-over is accompanied by a kind of mystical ceremony: holding in his left hand the flag stained with the blood of the martyrs of 9 November, Hitler grasps with his right hand a corner of the new standard, as though to transmit an invisible fluid from the old emblem to the new. This rite will be repeated invariably at each new handing-over of emblems. Its object is to symbolize the moral unity of the movement and the sacred principle on which it is founded.

Goebbels had come to Bamberg intending to defend the sections of northern Germany against the encroachments of the Munich "clan." He came away completely transformed, having recognized in Hitler the dictator of tomorrow. But Hitler, for his part, very quickly discerned Goebbels's exceptional abilities. During the conversations he had with him, he was seduced by his intellectual dynamism and the almost inexhaustible fertility of his imagination. He had been warned against "this Mephistophelean personage." Yet he perceived that he had finally found the only man capable of directing his propaganda.

On 1 November 1926, he names him head of the Berlin-Brandenburg sector. This post is all the more

important because, since March 1925, most of the state governments have forbidden Hitler to speak in public, which obliges him — outside Bavaria — to have himself replaced by substitutes and considerably hinders the Party's growth. Endowed with exceptional powers and answerable only to the Führer in person, the future Minister of Propaganda then undertakes the conquest of the capital. It is the beginning of a battle of more than six years, pursued day after day with increasing violence, and which will end only with the seizure of power.

Kampf um Berlin — the struggle for Berlin — is the title Goebbels gave to the book in which he recounts the vicissitudes of his struggle. But in order to understand fully the meaning of—

[Retained footnotes]

1. It will be recalled that the first Congress had taken place in Munich on 21 January 1921.

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—these words, it must be known that Hitler charged him with a double mission: to conquer Berlin opinion by propaganda, but also to impose the authority of the Munich Committee on the still-reluctant sections of northern Germany.

For this, Hitler begins by restricting Strasser's attributions. In order to avoid any overlapping of competencies, he withdraws from him in January 1927 the direction of propaganda, to entrust him with the post — no doubt not less important, but less spectacular — of chief of the First Organization Section.

Immediately rid of this cumbersome rival, Goebbels rushes to the assault with stupefying dynamism. On 4 July 1927 appears the first issue of his new daily, *Der Angriff*, whose success soon eclipses Otto Strasser's newspaper. Then group meetings and mass meetings follow one another at a dizzying pace that recalls the beginnings of National Socialism in Munich.

When the Third National Congress is held at Nuremberg on 21 August 1927, the Party has made a new leap forward: 30,000 S.A. march past Hitler and the N.S.D.A.P. numbers more than 70,000 members.

However, the year 1928 is marked by a return offensive of the parties of the left. In the elections of 20 May, the Socialists prevail over the national parties. Chancellor Marx is replaced by Hermann Müller, assisted by Messrs. Severing and Hilferding. General Groener, who has succeeded Dr. Gessler since 20 January, retains the post of Minister of the Reichswehr. Mr. Stresemann remains at the Wilhelmstrasse.

[Retained footnotes]

1. From this moment on, the Party will be composed of two Organization Sections. The first, directed by Gregor Strasser, has the purpose of undermining the existing regime. It comprises three subdivisions: foreign affairs (Dr. H. Nieland), the press (Dr. Dietrich), and the development of factory cells (W. Schumann). The second, directed by Colonel Hierl, is charged with building the cadres of the future State. It comprises: agriculture (Dr. W. Darré), the economy (Dr. Wagener), race and culture (M. Konopath), the interior (Dr. Nicolai), legal questions (Dr. Frank), technical questions (Gottfried Feder), and the labor service (Lieutenant Schulz). Apart from these two sections, a certain number of services

are directly attached to Hitler: propaganda, entrusted in the autumn of 1928 to Dr. Goebbels; the discipline and purge commission (Uschla), directed by Major Busch, the former leader of the Nuremberg S.A.; the Hitler Youth, directed by Baldur von Schirach; etc.

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As for the National Socialists, they win only 12 seats with 809,000 votes, which is a serious setback compared with 1924. At the announcement of these figures, the opposition declares that the N.S.D.A.P. is in full rout. It does not suspect that one of these twelve deputies will soon be president of the Reichstag: Hermann Göring, returned from Italy a few months earlier thanks to the amnesty promulgated by Marshal Hindenburg.

Faced with this manifest failure of the Nazi Party, the parties of the left reassure themselves. Decidedly, Hitler is not as dangerous as had been claimed. "He is a madman," declares Otto Braun, President of the Council of Prussia, "a hysteric, incapable of sustained action and who never, absolutely never, will take power." The ascending curve of the Brownshirts, having reached its apogee, is now in regression. The Movement will end by collapsing of itself, undermined by its internal dissensions and stifled by competition from the other national parties.

Is it really useful, under these conditions, to maintain the prohibition against speaking in public promulgated against Hitler? It is to give him cheaply the halo of martyrdom and to allow people to believe that his word has an invincible power. After long negotiations, the prohibition is lifted in Prussia on 28 September 1928. The parties of the left emphasize that this gesture "is proof of magnanimity toward their adversary." Should it not rather be attributed to the fact that they no longer fear him?

This is the error they commit and for which they will pay dearly. But while the Socialists and the Center congratulate themselves on their victory, ever darker clouds are gathering on the horizon.

The era of factitious prosperity inaugurated in 1924 by the creation of the Rentenmark is coming to an end. The deficit increases in alarming proportions: 6 billion francs for the single fiscal year 1929–1930. The American banks, hard hit by the Wall Street crash, seek to withdraw the money they have placed in Germany. Tax receipts decline—

[Retained footnotes]

1. Where they had received 1,924,000 votes.
2. It had been lifted in Bavaria some time earlier.

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—fall. The inconsiderate expenditures of the parties of the left increase the budgetary disequilibrium. "This descending curve," writes Max Hermant, "this inexorable line on a sheet of paper, is like a retreat traced on a map, the signature of destiny. In a short time the treasury is at bay, expedients exhausted,

bank loans worn to the thread. The wager of budgetary inflation is lost. Immediate necessities impose deflation.”

It is again the ruin of the middle classes, with its train of bankruptcies, misery, and social disturbances. Factories close their doors; the labor market contracts. Unemployment, which had fallen in 1927, rises to 1,200,000 during the summer of 1929 and exceeds 3,200,000 during the following winter.

Immediately the Communist Party emerges from its torpor and seeks to profit from the situation, for the increase in the number of unemployed is equivalent to an increase in the reserves from which it has only to draw in order to form an army of civil war. After the regression it had suffered since 1923, it feels the wind in its sails and again enters the field for the conquest of power. For the first time in five years, 1 May 1929 is marked by bloody incidents. Extremist elements raise barricades in Wedding, a working-class suburb of Berlin where agitation persists for several days; collisions take place between red militiamen and police agents. There are 19 dead and 36 seriously wounded.

On 6 May, the government orders the dissolution of the League of Fighters of the Red Front, but the Communist Party immediately founds a new association: the Antifascist Fighting League, or Antifa.

Parallel to this recrudescence of workers' agitation, peasant revolts are seen in the countryside. On 23 May, a bomb is thrown at the town hall of Itzehoe, and attacks of the same kind recur almost daily at Lüneburg and Oldenburg. Bands of peasants carrying the black flags of medieval jacqueries traverse Schleswig-Holstein and the region of Neumünster, burning town halls and terrorizing the inhabitants.

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However, the general discontent does not profit only the formations of the extreme left: the National Socialists too find in it a favorable milieu for the propagation of their ideas. At the Fourth Congress, held at Nuremberg from 1 to 4 August 1929, 60,000 S.A. and 2,000 members of the Hitler Youth march past the Führer and the principal leaders of the Party. This will, moreover, be the last Congress before the seizure of power, for now they are entering a period of intense activity, in which the S.A. and the S.S. will constantly be in the breach.

In their turn, the reactionary parties and the Steel Helmet enter the lists. Until now the Stahlhelm, directed by two former officers of the imperial army, Lieutenant Seldte and Lieutenant-Colonel Duesterberg, had been content to be a simple paramilitary formation placed under the honorary presidency of Marshal Hindenburg. On 22 September 1928, emerging from its reserve, the Steel Helmet launched a referendum asking that the powers of the President of the Reich be increased, thus marking its will to intervene actively in the country's politics.

Shortly afterward, on 20–22 October, the German National Party, or D.N.V.P., places Mr. Hugenberg at its head and designates him as sole leader of the national opposition.

Chairman of the board of directors of the Krupp steelworks and man of confidence of the magnates of heavy industry, Privy Councillor Alfred Hugenberg has always maneuvered behind the scenes of the Reichstag, and it is by the sole power of money that he has become the leader of the National Party. An ambitious and brutal dealmaker, the “silver fox,” as he is called because of his large white mustache and his graying hair, acquired, thanks to the capital of the ironmasters, the largest consortium of

German newspapers, the Scherl publishing house, the Telegraph Union, and the Ala advertising agency. He also owns Ufa, the most powerful film company beyond the Rhine. Having formidable publicity resources at his disposal, he uses them both—

[Retained footnotes]

1. Schutz-Staffel, or Protection Echelons. Whereas members of the Assault Sections wear brown shirts, those of the Protection Echelons are clothed in a black uniform.

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—to earn money and to realize a political program whose negative part is not without analogy with that of the National Socialists: overthrow the Republic, abolish the Treaty of Versailles, smash the unions, and crush the Communists. Seconded by the Stahlhelm, which he largely subsidizes, he decides during the summer of 1929 to launch a referendum against the adoption of the Young Plan and asks Hitler to lend him his support.

Hitler accepts. The left wing of his Party is stupefied to see him ally with the most authentic representative of capitalist reaction. Strasser does not hide his disapproval. But Hitler knows perfectly well why he is acting thus. He has few illusions about the result of the referendum.

What he wants is to profit from the enormous means of diffusion at the disposal of the German National Party.

The whole campaign against the Young Plan will be orchestrated by the National Socialists — it is only on this condition that Hitler agrees to lend his support — but it is Hugenberg, and Hugenberg alone, who will pay the costs. His information agencies and his newspapers will have to spread Hitler's speeches from one end of the country to the other. Hitler will furnish the slogans and propagandists, Hugenberg the presses and the financial means. For the rest, nothing will be changed in the aims or policy of the N.S.D.A.P., and only the instructions emanating from the Party's central leadership will remain valid. Once the campaign is finished, the struggle will resume as though nothing had happened. "It will then be seen," Hitler declares to his lieutenants, "that victory belongs to the boldest party, to the one whose doctrine is the most dynamic and the newest."

And the weeks that follow confirm the correctness of these views. The referendum receives only 6 million votes, which is insufficient to prevent the Young Plan from being adopted by the Reichstag. But the vanquished man is not Hitler; it is Hugenberg. While symptomatic cracks are heard in the German National Party, adherents flock by the thousands to the N.S.D.A.P. It numbers 176,500 members at the end of the year. Moreover, of the 6 million voters who participated in the referendum, at least 3 million

[Retained footnotes]

1. It is at this time that Hitler acquires an important ally in the person of Dr. Schacht, and that Prince August Wilhelm of Hohenzollern joins the Party.

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—who were still voting for Hugenberg a year earlier, are now won over to National Socialism.

On 27 March 1930, the Müller Cabinet is overthrown. The era of Chancellor Brüning begins.

The next day, 28 March, Hitler creates the reserve S.A. for men over thirty-five, and two days later, 1 April, the motorized troop corps placed under the orders of Commandant Hühnlein. Thanks to these new formations, mass assemblies will become easier and it will be possible to transport the S.A. rapidly from one point of the territory to another.

However, a wind of insubordination is blowing through the Party. Its causes? It is difficult to isolate them exactly. Divergences of viewpoint among subordinate chiefs, irritation among the men — the wearing of uniforms has been prohibited in Berlin, then in Prussia — and the exhausting work imposed on all contribute to creating an atmosphere of anxiety and fever. The first to manifest his discontent openly is Otto Strasser, whose newspaper is seriously handicapped by Goebbels's Angriff. Hitler demands that he sell his daily and his weeklies to the Eher house, official publisher of the Party, and that he come work in Munich. Otto Strasser refuses. Hitler orders Goebbels to expel him from the Party. This sanction is immediately applied. Otto Strasser leaves the N.S.D.A.P. with a handful of supporters and founds a dissident group, the "Revolutionary National-Socialist Party," which will later become the "Black Front." Gregor Strasser, by contrast, who no longer gets along very well with his brother, bows before the Führer's decision.

More difficult to repress is the revolt fomented at the beginning of September by Captain Stennes, leader of the Assault Sections for the Eastern region, who therefore commands all the Berlin S.A. He is the former commander of the 4th Battalion of the Black Reichswehr, dissolved by General von Seeckt after the Kùstrin putsch. He was placed at the head of the S.A. of the capital by Captain von Pfeffer, to whom Hitler, absorbed by political questions—

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—has for some time entrusted command of the Brownshirts. Captain von Pfeffer, he too, is not unknown to us. We have already seen him at work in the Baltic provinces, where he took part in the putsch against the Ulmanis government, then in the Ruhr, where he fought against the red formations in liaison with the troops of General von Watter.

Hitler is obliged to intervene in person to calm tempers. He has to make the rounds of the Berlin headquarters in order to restore discipline there, which is not always easy, for the members of the Berlin Assault Sections are "hard men" to whom one must speak without mincing words. Captain Stennes, who incited them to revolt, is excluded from the Party. As for Captain von Pfeffer, who did not revolt himself but showed a regrettable lack of authority, he is removed from his functions as commander of the S.A. As compensation, Hitler will give him a little later a seat in the Reichstag.

To whom will the Führer entrust the supreme command of the Assault Sections? Göring, who occupied this post in 1923, asks nothing better than to take it up again. But Hitler reserves the former commander of the Richthofen squadron for negotiations with official circles and the parties of the right.

In reality, Hitler considers that only one man is capable of directing the S.A. as he desires, and that man is Röhm. But Röhm has left Germany: he has gone to South America, where he holds a post as officer-instructor in the Bolivian army. Thus Hitler retains for the moment the direction of the S.A.

While Hitler is curbing these inclinations toward revolt inside the Party, Chancellor Brüning has engaged the struggle with the Reichstag. Supported by the left and the moderate parties, he has resolutely entered the path of deflation. But when he presents to Parliament a set of measures intended to restore order in German finances, Parliament rears up and refuses to vote them. Then, making use of Article 48, Brüning promulgates by decree the taxes—

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—necessary for the balancing of the budget. A second time, the Reichstag refuses to ratify these measures. Unable to get out of this impasse and lacking a sufficient majority, Brüning asks President Hindenburg to dissolve the Assembly. The new elections are fixed for 14 September 1930.

The first results of the ballot are to be known during the night of 14 to 15 September. Hitler, who is awaiting them in Munich, has gone to the theater. “Suddenly,” he recounts, “Adolf Müller arrives, very excited, and declares: ‘I think it is a victory. It may give 60 to 70 mandates.’ I answer him that if the German people were fair, they would give us more. Inwardly I said to myself: ‘If only it could be 100!’ Suddenly there is the certainty of 300 mandates assured. Müller offers a round. It went up to 107! How can I express what I felt at that moment?”

The next morning, Germany learns with stupefaction that the number of National-Socialist votes has risen from 800,000 to 6,500,000 and that the Hitlerites have won 107 seats in the Reichstag, instead of 12, making the N.S.D.A.P. the second German political party. “The legal path on which Hitler had embarked at the time of the second foundation of the Party in 1925,” writes Gerhard Rühle, “and which he had followed since then with invincible obstinacy, was indeed the weapon needed to fight against the system erected by the November revolution.”

On 13 October, the 107 Nazi deputies make their entry into the Reichstag. They cross the hemicycle in marching step and go sit down in their places, clothed in their uniforms.

It is exactly five years and ten months since Hitler came out of prison.

[Retained footnotes]

2. The first is the Socialist Party with 143 seats out of 577.

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II

INTRIGUES AROUND FOUR ARMIES

A vast chessboard on which four political armies move, with their flags and their staffs, their combat

formations and their protective troops; four antagonistic blocs evolving in an atmosphere of passions heated white-hot, now allies, now enemies, moving alongside one another without incident, then suddenly colliding in bloody scuffles; and, in the middle of these four masses in movement, a motionless and hieratic Reichswehr, whose mere presence prevents them from resorting to a coup de force — such is the image Germany offers at the turn of the years 1931–1933.

During the short respite that followed the revolutionary period and the era of coups d'état, it was possible to believe that the Weimar regime was going to stabilize. Grave error. Already the new crisis is announced, which will sweep away what remains of the republican institutions. The government proves powerless to stem the bubbling of forces that is lifting the country. Cabinets maintain themselves in power only by resorting to exceptional measures which, though written into the Constitution, nevertheless distort the normal play of institutions. Henceforth it is no longer the Reichstag that governs, but the masses. Power is no longer in the hemicycle of Parliament, but in the streets and public squares, in meeting halls and stadiums, where hundreds of thousands of men acclaim speakers who are ever more passionate, ever more frenzied.

Red Front, Iron Front, Brown Front, Gray Front contend with the utmost violence for the votes of the nation.

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A new revolution is on the march, whose outcome no one can foresee, but which can have no other end than a nationalist dictatorship or the Bolshevization of the country.

What do these four groups want? What are their programs, their structure, and the forces on which they rely?

Under the red flag with the Soviet star, adorned with the sickle and hammer, the Red Front groups the most active members of the German Communist Party (K.P.D.) and the various combat groups attached to it. According to data supplied by the Communists themselves, the forces of the Red Front are divided into three categories: I. Basic organizations; II. United Front organizations; III. Shock organizations.

Among the basic organizations are the German Communist Party (German section of the Third International), which forms the central bastion of the revolutionary edifice; the Union of German Communist Youth (section of the International Communist Youth); and the Union of Fighters of the Red Front, or Roterfrontkämpfer Verband, which supplies the cadres for the whole of the Party's military formations.

The Union of Fighters of the Red Front comprises a Central Directorate, Regional Directorates, and some ten Local Directorates. Each Local Directorate is composed of four divisions and several "factory groups" or enterprise cells. The smallest combat formation is the group, which is composed of 8 men living as far as possible on the same block, so as to be easily mobilizable in case of alert. Later the effectives of the group will be reduced to 5 men. Four groups form a section (Abteilung), and three sections a team (Kameradschaft).

[Retained footnotes]

2. “Every leader must realize that the group of five is our basic formation,” one reads in the circular transmitted on 25 February 1933 by the Central Committee of the Communist Party to the various Regional Directorates. “Our group leaders must show the maximum of initiative. A very good alert and information service must be organized between the different groups, permitting them to be mobilized at any hour of the day or night.”

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Dissolved on 6 May 1929 following the Wedding riots, the Union of Fighters of the Red Front transformed itself into the Antifascist Fighting League, or Antifa. This League received approximately the same structure as the preceding one.

Among the United Front organizations are the Revolutionary Trade-Union Opposition, section of the Red Trade-Union International, which groups factory workers; Red Aid of Germany, section of International Red Aid; and the formations of Self-Protection of the Red Masses, likewise divided into groups of five, sections, and teams, distributed into block, street, and district groups. Their badge is a Soviet star showing, on a silver background, an outstretched fist with a red flag floating in the wind. The uniform consists of a Russian blouse, a Red Army cap, riding breeches, boots, and a belt with a shoulder strap.

Among the shock organizations are found the Red Pioneers, the Red Sports Associations, and the Combat Committees. These have the mission of recruiting and instructing groups of terrorists comprising from 10 to 200 men charged with particularly difficult tasks: dynamiting bridges and railway lines, attacks against the leaders of enemy formations, sabotage of railway stations and telegraph and telephone centers, etc.

The Antifascist League, Self-Protection of the Red Masses, and Combat Committees fit into one another and form an occult network covering all Germany. It is very difficult to evaluate their total effectives, for until the end these groups will remain clandestine. Only a few isolated figures permit an idea of their strength. At the moment of its prohibition, the Union of Fighters of the Red Front numbered, according to Neuberg, 100,000 men distributed in 545 groups; the Antifa League about 250,000. In September 1932 there were at Essen 1,290 members of the Antifascist League and 183 members of Self-Protection; at Duisburg, 1,622 members of the League—

[Retained footnotes]

2. After the Reichstag elections in August 1932, the house, street, and district groups were called Stars, Oriflammes, and Banners respectively.

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—of the Antifascist League and 1,132 members of Self-Protection. Around the same time, 500 Self-Protection echelons were formed in Berlin, 50 in Stuttgart, 260 in Altona, comprising around 13,000 members. In February 1933 there were in Hamburg 150 block-surveillance groups comprising 5,500 men, of whom 2,500 were constantly on alert. When one knows that the total number of regimented

Communist militants amounted to more than 1 million, and that the Communist Party received up to 6 million votes in certain elections — that is, 13.5 percent of the electorate — one measures the force represented by such an organization.

Sworn to the red flag, equipped and armed with the help of materiel and explosives stolen from factories and arsenals, financed by the Komintern through the intermediary of International Red Aid and the Soviet commercial delegation in Hamburg, the Communist combat organizations constitute a veritable foreign army camped on the territory of the Reich. Closely subordinated to the Party's Central Committee, they are, like it, under the direct, organic, and financial dependence of Moscow, to which they owe absolute obedience.

Instructed by secret agents of the GPU furnished with false passports, and by former leaders of proletarian hundreds who had fired shots during the revolutionary struggles of 1918, 1919, and 1920, the members of the Communist formations are above all initiated into the tactics of insurrection and street fighting: attacks on the strategic points of urban agglomerations, erection of barricades, defense of blocks of houses, etc. Their aim is the revolutionary conquest of power and the establishment of the dictatorship of the proletariat. This conquest must take place in three stages: 1. a preliminary period of agitation and infiltration; 2. armed insurrection; 3. the taking in hand of power.

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3. The overall budget of the German Communist Party for the year 1932 was 3.7 million gold marks. The deficit of the Red Aid budget amounted to 231,000 marks. Both were paid directly by Moscow. The principal liaison agents between the Komintern and the German Communist Party were Walter Stöcker and the Jewish Willi Münzenberg, who was called the "Red Hugenberg." The latter became in 1936 — after his expulsion from Germany — one of the official representatives of the Komintern in France.

4. In particular, the Russo-German Joint Stock Transport Company (Derutra) and the German-Russian Petroleum Company (Derop), which, behind their commercial façades, were in reality only offices of the foreign section of the GPU (InoGPU).

5. The secret organization of International Red Aid maintained, with the aid of the GPU, passport-forgery offices, among others in Berlin, Hamburg, and Danzig. These issued no fewer than 5,000 false passports and 10,000 irregular certificates between 1929 and 1933.

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During the first period, the revolutionaries will strive to win the masses to Marxist ideology, disorganize the cadres of bourgeois society, intimidate the government by strikes and mass demonstrations, and finally infiltrate the army and the police.

As soon as this work is sufficiently advanced, the combat formations will enter the game: this will be armed insurrection. The red formations will attack the adversary by surprise, at the moment when his forces are dispersed, and will disarm the regiments of the Reichswehr and the police formations, already infected by Soviet propaganda. The terrorist groups will seize public buildings, wireless broadcasting centers, newspaper buildings, stations, and banks by means of dynamite, while the

extremist unions and factory cells will paralyze the economic life of the country by proclaiming the general strike. It will then be the moment to pass to the third stage: the taking in hand of power, after a short period of terror.

The object of this terror is “the physical annihilation of the enemies of the working class.” By mass shootings and methodical repression, the Reds will exterminate the forces of reaction. That day the Marxist revolution will surge over Germany. There will be witnessed “the most violent clash between antagonistic classes that history has ever known”; it will be “the most important stage of the world revolution after the glorious days of October 1917,” for “through the German wound, the Soviet dictatorship will extend to all western Europe.”

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1. The broad lines of this plan of action, inspired by the military writings of Engels and Lenin, were elaborated by the Twelfth Plenary Assembly of the Executive Committee of the Communist International, sitting in Moscow at the beginning of September 1932. The plan was transmitted in October 1932 to the Third Conference of Workers of the German Communist Party, which adopted it without modification.
2. For the period from 1 January to 31 December 1932, 1,225 attempted corruptions in the Reichswehr and the police are reported, but this figure includes only the cases brought to the attention of the military authorities.
3. It is impossible to fix in advance the date of the insurrection: it depends solely on the progress of the preliminary disintegration. “A movement of revolutionary masses does not develop according to the calendar.” Hence the necessity for the combat formations to be constantly on alert.
5. “When the German Communist formations pass to action, the Soviet Red Army will come to their aid.” Declaration by the Communist deputy Pieck during a mass demonstration at Moabit on 1 August 1931.

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Quite different is the Iron Front, constituted on 23 December 1931 to fight “against the enemies of democracy” and grouping under the black-red-gold flag of the Republic the members of the Socialist Party (S.P.D.), the free trade unions, and the Reichsbanner or Reich Banner.

Of the four armies present, the Reich Banner is numerically the strongest, since in 1932 it has nearly 2 million adherents. Founded on 24 February 1924 and directed by Mr. Hörsing, an influential member of the Socialist Party, it too has its standards, its protective troops, and its badge: three parallel arrows, their points turned downward. And yet, how amorphous it appears beside the Communist combat formations, the Stahlhelm, and the Hitlerian Assault Sections!

Supported by the hundreds of thousands of members of the Social-Democratic Party, controlling through it 2,034,000 unionized workers, disposing of considerable propaganda funds, supported by the 171 Socialist newspapers, and drawing its strength from its 2,500 local sections, the Reichsbanner nevertheless remains “a great flaccid and soulless body, reacting poorly to the attacks that come upon it

from all sides, not for lack of combativeness, but for lack of a clear position, of a program that is finally something other than the poor worn-out, faded commonplaces—

[Retained footnotes]

1. Alfred Langer, *Der Weg zum Sieg*, p. 11. This tactic is inspired by Lenin's precept: "One must never play with revolution and, once one has begun it, one must pursue it to the end."

2, 3, 4. Official declarations of the Twelfth Plenary Assembly of the Executive Committee of the Communist International, Moscow, September 1932.

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—which do not leave the elementary domain and seem made from the dust of the scenery of the other parties."

No doubt its parades are impressive by the volume of the effectives they set in motion, but, from the dynamic point of view, its effectiveness is almost nil. Liberal and generous, but timid and opportunist like the parliamentary fraction of which it is the emanation, no breath lifts it. One might say that the regime it is charged with defending has transmitted to it its inferiority complex. Thus it will play only a second-rank role in the dramatic game about to unfold. At the last moment, many of its members, disappointed by its inertia, will swell the ranks of the Hitlerian Assault Sections or join their workshop comrades in the Communist combat formations. The rest will collapse ingloriously under the blows of its enemies.

Facing this Iron Front, which so little deserves its name, stand the gray and disciplined legions of the Stahlhelm and the Kyffhäuserbund. We have already spoken of the Steel Helmet, founded at Magdeburg at the end of 1918 by Lieutenant Seldte "to perpetuate the camaraderie of the front and give young men a physical and moral tempering equivalent to that which they once received during their military service."

Very quickly, the Stahlhelm underwent considerable expansion: 23,000 adherents strong at the end of 1919, it numbers 60,000 in 1920, 175,000 in 1923, 425,000 in 1929, and nearly 1 million in 1932. It is composed of four sections of unequal importance: 1. the Kernstahlhelm, into which are admitted only former combatants who had at least six months at the front; 2. the Ringstahlhelm, for those with less than six months at the front; 3. the Jungstahlhelm for recruits from seventeen to twenty-three years old; finally, the Scharnhorstbund for young men from thirteen to seventeen.

[Retained footnotes]

3. From the month of March 1919, the Stahlhelm supplied the cadres of the Einwohnerwehr of Magdeburg. In August of the same year, it placed four complete companies at the government's disposal to fight against the Spartacists.

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From the territorial point of view, the sections of the Stahlhelm are distributed into battalions (Ortsgruppen), regiments (Kreisgruppen), and brigades (Landesgruppen). Their members, clothed in the feldgrau field uniform and a cap bearing a steel helmet as its insignia, are required to undergo regular periods of exercise: day and night marches, field maneuvers, reconnaissance exercises, map reading, etc. Their flag is the old war standard of the imperial army, white with a black cross, with the Hohenzollern eagle in the center and, in the left corner, the Iron Cross.

At the beginning, the Stahlhelm had no other ambition than to be a patriotic and paramilitary formation. Little by little, the composition of its effectives and the evolution of events led it to accentuate its political color. Commanded by two former officers of the imperial army, Lieutenant Seldte and Colonel Duesterberg, placed under the high patronage of Marshal Hindenburg, grouping in its ranks a large number of reactionary and monarchist officers, such as Major von Stephani and Captain Ehrhardt, working in close liaison with Colonel Reinhard's Kyffhäuserbund, financed by Hugenberg and the German National Party, the Steel Helmet became, from 1929 on, the permanent army of reaction. What makes the strength of the Stahlhelm is its close identification with the traditional Prussian spirit. But that is also its weakness, for it possesses no original vision of the State, and the future for which it works is only the restoration of the past.

[Retained footnotes]

1. Lieutenant Seldte, a former chemist and industrialist, originally belonged to the German People's Party (D.V.P.). He is not a career officer, but he fought bravely at the front. Duesterberg, by contrast, is a former cadet. In 1900 he took part in the China expedition against the Boxers. In 1914 he was at the War Ministry. He took part in the battle of Ypres, then was sent on mission to Bucharest. The end of hostilities found him at General Headquarters, at Spa, then at the Armistice Commission, where he began a violent campaign against Erzberger. After the war he enrolled in the German National Party (D.N.V.P.).

2. The Kyffhäuserbund, commanded by Colonel Reinhard, the "liberator of Berlin," and presided over by Marshal von Mackensen, is an association of former combatants about 100,000 members strong. Many of them belong to the Kernstahlhelm. This is why these two groups collaborate while remaining distinct.

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"A people," declares Seldte, "is like a garden that must be pruned, cultivated, and constantly maintained. A State is like a great and noble commercial firm that must be administered honestly. Politics is the wise and reasoned direction of this firm." To which Hitler replies: "The nation is the content and substance of the Reich. The people, created by God, is what is and what remains; it is the sole goal of all human activity and of all the institutions of the State."

To bring these two formulas together is to underline the contrast that exists between Seldte and Hitler: one is a realistic and practical business leader, of scrupulous honesty but without great imagination; the other, a visionary animated by an irrational faith in the destinies of his country.

It is by his torrential speeches that Hitler has gathered the 400,000 members of his Party. But if speech

can galvanize a crowd, it cannot make an army spring forth. Facing the Stahlhelm and the Communist formations, Hitler feels the necessity of developing and more strongly structuring his Assault Sections.

Until 1923, the S.A. were only almost exclusively Bavarian formations, distributed into cohorts (Hundertschaften) under Göring's command. It is only after 1925 that they begin to extend to the whole Reich, but their structure is still too vague to be able to measure themselves against their emulators in the Stahlhelm.

On 1 October 1930, that is, fifteen days after the Reichstag elections, Hitler addresses an urgent appeal to Röhm, who is in Bolivia. Röhm is on the point of being promoted to adviser in the Ministry of War at La Paz. But on receiving the Führer's appeal, he abandons everything to return to Germany. On 5 January 1931, he is named Chief of Staff of the S.A. and S.S., which gives him high command over the whole military apparatus of the Party.

Immediately the former leader of the Reichskriegsflagge proceeds to a complete recasting of the Assault Sections. These are everywhere reduced to a uniform type. Four to twelve—

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—men constitute a squad (Schar). Three to six squads form a section (Trupp). Four sections form a company (Sturm), commanded by a captain and an instructor officer. Three to five battalions (Sturmbann) constitute a regiment (Standarte), whose effectives vary from 1,000 to 3,000 men. Three regiments constitute a brigade (Untergruppe). Four to seven brigades constitute a division (Gruppe).

German territory is divided into 21 regions, each corresponding to a division. These groups are commanded either by former Free Corps leaders, or by young men who have distinguished themselves by their energy and gifts of organization, or who have been promoted to the rank of general by Röhm's favor: Peter von Heydebreck, who lost an arm in the Argonne and whose name we have already cited during the Upper Silesian fighting, commands the S.A. division of Pomerania; Schneidhuber, that of Bavaria; Wilhelm Schmidt, that of Munich; Karl Ernst, that of Berlin. The Hanover division is commanded by Victor Lutze; that of Westphalia by Scheppmann; that of East Prussia by Litzmann; that of Saxony by Hans Hayn; etc.

The S.S., or Protection Echelons, are also placed under Röhm's control. Commanded successively by Schreck, Heiden, and, from 9 January 1929, by aspirant Himmler, these formations came from the small special commando called Stosstrupp Hitler, which played an important role in the Bürgerbräukeller putsch.

The S.S., who serve as the Führer's personal guard and watch over the flag of 9 November — the sacred emblem of the Party — are distinguished from the S.A. by their black uniform and the death's-head insignia adorning their cap. About 400 men strong at the moment of their creation, they number 60,000 men in 1932 and 100,000 in January 1933.

Besides the S.A. and the S.S., the brown army includes about a hundred motorized columns, commanded by Major—

[Retained footnotes]

4. This is the one held by the volunteer Bauriedl at the moment of his death and which he stained with his blood during the shooting in front of the Feldherrnhalle.

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Huhnlein, motorcycle corps, cavalry formations, and even an aviation squadron. The principal qualities of the Hitlerian militias are offensive spirit and mobility, which can only be obtained at the price of very severe discipline.

The longer the struggle goes on, the more the SA are subjected to rigorous service. From 1930 onward, members of the Assault Sections are summoned four or five times a week for propaganda parades or to provide protection for public meetings. It is therefore soon necessary to create an SA reserve, or S.A.R., comprising militiamen over thirty-five years of age and those whose work prevents them from taking part in all the Party's demonstrations.

As the numbers grow, the uniforms acquire their definitive style. Collar patches appear in the colors of the Länder to which the units belong, and figures representing the battalion numbers. In 1931, numbering by battalion disappears and the Standarten receive the corresponding numbers of the regiments of the old Imperial Army. At Gorlitz, the SA Standarte bears No. 19, to show that it replaces the old 19th Infantry Regiment von Courbiere. Staff officers - from Groups upward - wear, as in the regular army, amaranth collar patches and trouser stripes. Their ranks are indicated by stars and oak leaves.

Parallel with this work of reorganization and recruitment, Rohm centralizes the organs of command. The SA staff then includes a whole set of services, independent of those of the Party: the services of direction, personnel, justice, and hygiene; the staff, training, and administration sections;

[Retained footnotes]

1. At the Nuremberg Congress in 1933, 350,000 SA and SS men would be transported in three days and brought back in two, thanks to 1,500 convoy timetables and 350 equipment parks. The unloading of this enormous mass of men would require only five to seven minutes. (Jacques Bardoux, *Le Temps*, issue of 11 November 1933.)

2. This discipline is all the more difficult to maintain because it is purely voluntary. It is impossible, in fact, to impose disciplinary sanctions on volunteer militiamen. SA men guilty of negligence in service or acts of insubordination are reprimanded. After the second reprimand they are broken in rank or expelled from the troop.

3. The highest unit of the S.A.R. is the Standarte.

4. In all garrisons where, before 1914, there had been Jager regiments, Rohm would establish Jagerstandarten.

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and finally a cadre school, or Reichsführerschule. Thus, under Rohm's impulse, there is built up an immense political army, which will soon number more than 400,000 men, financed and maintained by private means; an army whose most determined adversaries of National Socialism will themselves have to acknowledge that "it may be regarded, in the matter of organization, as one of the greatest achievements of the present time."

It would be vain to claim that the Reichswehr feels no concern before the continuous progress of these four rival blocs. It braces itself with all its strength to keep them in check, but it knows that a single clumsy gesture, a single unfortunate incident, would be enough to break the balance and set fire to the powder.

It would be equally naive to believe that the Reichswehr, despite the neutrality it professes, feels identical sentiments toward these various groups. Between it and the Communist combat formations there reigns open hostility. Toward the Reichsbanner, this hostility is softened by a shade of contempt. The army is not unaware that the Red Front and the Iron Front have hidden ties closer than the quarrels of their leaders might suggest, and that if revolution broke out there would be a strong chance of finding them side by side.

As for the brown army, the Reichswehr displays toward it a haughty reserve. Rohm may be connected with Schleicher and Ludendorff; Hitler may repeat: "We have no interest in destroying the army; in my eyes that would be the greatest of crimes. My only desire is to see the Reichswehr, like the German people, become imbued with the new spirit"; nevertheless the generals of the Bendlerstrasse

[Retained footnotes]

1. In appearance the Red Front and the Iron Front are opposed. But contacts continue inside the groups, for the Communists strive to infiltrate the free trade unions and the Reichsbanner. Thus one reads in the alert order addressed to its members on 25 February 1933 by the Central Leadership of the League of Red Front Fighters: "Permanent contact with the Reichsbanner, formations and leaders: the atmosphere there is favorable to us. Common work must be organized there."

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nonetheless regard the National-Socialist Movement with a mixture of anxiety, condescension, and aversion. It is precisely this "new spirit" that they disapprove of, for the explosive turbulence of the movement and the demagogy of its leaders fit badly with the silence to which von Seeckt has accustomed them. Let us not forget that the Reichswehr has preserved from its revolutionary experiences an instinctive phobia of the masses - for the mass is the only force capable of submerging it - and that the crowd is supremely displeasing to it, whether dressed in brown, red, or gray. For professional soldiers, the men of the Assault Sections are not "real soldiers," but loudmouths in uniform who think everything is permitted to them. Moreover, this manner of giving the SA formations the same serial numbers as the old imperial regiments irritates them to the highest degree, for it duplicates the tradition companies established inside the army. The Reichswehr considers itself the sole heir to German military traditions, and this privilege it does not intend to share with anyone.

Its attitude toward the Stahlhelm is quite different. In it, the Reichswehr sees not a possible rival but a precious auxiliary. The high patronage of Marshal Hindenburg and the presence in its ranks of countless retired officers can only strengthen the sympathy it feels for it. This sympathy even goes beyond a simple moral affinity, for General Staff circles assign the Stahlhelm a well-defined task.

Until now, in the event of conflict, the Reichswehr has been able to count on a large number of reserves formed by former combatants, but from year to year these reserves are diminishing. It is estimated, in fact, that past thirty-five years of age men have family concerns that reduce their fighting spirit and make them fit to serve only in the Landwehr. Now the last class to have taken part in the war - and which, moreover, was badly trained - the class born in 1900, is approaching this limit. Until 1935, which will be the crucial year, the Reichswehr still has four or five classes of former combatants available. From 1935 onward there will be no more.

[Residual source-text fragment]

1930, during the trial of Lieutenants Ludin and Scheringer of the 5th Artillery Regiment, accused of having formed National-Socialist cells inside the Reichswehr.

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The moment is therefore not far off when it will have to replace its volunteers, whose enlistment contracts will expire, with recruits having no notion of the profession of arms.

Now the leaders of the Reichswehr are in the process of drawing up a plan for reorganizing the army, based on lowering the length of enlistment and on a considerable increase in effectives, which would be raised to around 200,000 men. This plan will require an annual call-up of 30,000, 40,000, or 50,000 recruits. If it is adopted, the young soldiers will have to be chosen among members of sports and patriotic associations, and preferably in the Stahlhelm. The General Staff therefore attributes to the Steel Helmets the role of a reservoir of forces, capable of providing it with young men endowed with the beginnings of military training and offering every guarantee from the moral point of view.

Thus the Reichswehr's policy toward the Stahlhelm consists, if not in favoring it openly, at least in protecting it against the attacks of its enemies, for its maintenance appears to it bound up with its own future development.

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III THE REPUBLIC AT BAY (15 October 1930-31 July 1932)

While military circles are absorbed by these problems, the civil government presided over by Chancellor Brüning struggles against a situation that becomes more difficult every day. Harshly struck by the crisis, the most important industries are forced to dismiss part of their personnel. The discontent thus created and the growing misery greatly benefit the Communists, who methodically continue their work of undermining.

On 15 October 1930, 126,000 Berlin workers in the metal industry go on strike to protest against the reduction of their wages. On 2 January 1931, the Communist unions of the Ruhr likewise stop work. On 1 May, during the night, the Soviet flag is planted on the roof of the University of Berlin, and at Moabit, an SA battalion returning to its quarters falls into an ambush laid by the Reds: there are 3 dead and 28 wounded.

The situation grows still worse during the following week. On 8 June, extremists raise barricades in Hamburg and brawls break out in Chemnitz, Beuthen, Bremen, Düsseldorf, and Duisburg. On the 11th, scuffles are reported in Kassel, Frankfurt am Main, and again in Hamburg, which remains one of the principal centers of Communist agitation. The day after the next, unrest spreads to the Ruhr, Kiel, Cologne, and Leipzig.

These rolling strikes and the disturbances accompanying them complete the disorganization of economic life. Like a wave

[Retained footnotes]

1. Let us recall that Hamburg is the seat of the Soviet Trade Delegation.

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that no human force manages to contain, unemployment rises in terrifying fashion. On 15 November 1930, there were 3,484,000 unemployed; on 1 December, there are 3,762,000; on 15 December, 3,977,000; on 1 January 1931, 4,357,000; on 15 January, 4,765,000.

The crisis finally reaches even the most solid credit institutions. On 13 July, the Darmstadter und Nationalbank suspends payments. The Dresdner Bank is also in difficulty. In panic, depositors rush the counters. On 14 July, the government is forced to order the closure of all banks and of the stock exchange; reopening takes place the next day "only for payments of vital importance." The Reichsbank comes to the aid of the private banks. But this effort exhausts its available resources; it raises its discount rate to 10 percent and that of advances on securities to 15 percent.

At the end of its resources, the government sees itself compelled to limit the duration of unemployment benefits. After a certain time, workers without work will be abandoned to their fate. Parallel to these restrictions - which drive a whole part of the population to despair - the government reduces the salaries of civil servants and pays them only one quarter of their emoluments.

And while factories close their doors, while the most powerful citadels of capitalism totter on their foundations and the columns of unemployed lengthen day by day, the roads are furrowed by marching troops preceded by their red, white, or tricolored standards, with their symbolic emblems - hammer and sickle, swastika, parallel arrows, or iron cross - some saluting with the arm raised, others with the fist thrust out: monstrous parades of the Stahlhelm at Coblenz and Breslau, at Munich and Berlin; SA rallies at Chemnitz, Meiningen, and Gera; Reichsbanner marches at Berlin, Munich, and Cologne; demonstrations of the Red Front at Weimar, Berlin, Essen, and Hamburg.

Such is the atmosphere in which, on 10 October 1931, the first meeting between Hitler and Marshal Hindenburg takes place. Göring, who is in Sweden at the bedside of his dying wife,

[Retained footnotes]

1. This meeting was arranged by Schleicher after repeated approaches by Rohm.

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returns expressly to Berlin to attend the interview. But it does not produce the hoped-for results. Hindenburg receives Hitler with icy coldness. The former commander-in-chief of Wilhelm II's armies refuses to collaborate with an "Austrian corporal" whom his entourage depicts to him as a vulgar platform agitator. As in the past, he retains all his confidence in Brüning, who is striving to block the road to National Socialism and prevent it, cost what it may, from coming to power.

Disappointed by the negative result of this meeting, Hitler then accepts the alliance proposed to him by right-wing circles. On 11 October, at Harzburg, a meeting is held of the leaders of the German-National Party and the Steel Helmets. Hugenberg, Schacht, Seldte, Duesterberg, and influential representatives of big industry attend. Hitler goes there accompanied by Rudolf Hess and several battalions of brownshirts. He officially announces that he adheres to the united front constituted by the national opposition to bring down Brüning. The SA march side by side with the Stahlhelm. But the members of the Steel Helmet have come in greater numbers than they had promised, so that the National Socialists are in the minority. The Führer must make a great effort over himself to control his anger and consent to this alliance dictated to him by reasons of mere expediency. Everything irritates him in this rigid and conventional milieu, where monocled officers of the old regime and the magnates in black morning coats of high finance predominate. He refuses to sign a common declaration, reads his own speech in a hurried voice, and excuses himself from attending the luncheon that is to bring together the chiefs of the "conspiracy" at the close of the parade.

[Retained footnotes]

1. She will die a few days later, carried off by the pulmonary ailment she contracted beside her husband during their flight from Munich to Venice after the failed putsch of 1923.
2. Count Kalckreuth, president of the Reichs-Landbund, Messrs. Lindt and von Sybel represent agricultural capital; Messrs. Brandt, president of the powerful "Union of Mines" of Essen, Schlenker, and Poensgen represent heavy industry and the Steel Cartel; Mr. Krueger, the potash trust; Messrs. Bluhm and Gok, the shipyards; Mr. Ravene, the iron industry; Mr. Reinacker, the machine industry; Mr. Delius, textiles. Messrs. Krupp and Thyssen, traveling in America, sent their excuses.
3. "In the course of the summer of 1931," writes Otto Dietrich, chief of the NSDAP press service, "Hitler resolved systematically to win over the leading personalities of industry and of the moderate bourgeois parties, in order to tear them, stone by stone, from the governmental edifice... The result was not long in coming. The governmental scaffolding began to crack in an alarming, mysterious, incomprehensible way." (Mit Hitler in die Macht, pp. 45-46.)

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How much more at ease he feels two days later, when he reviews at Brunswick the SA division of the North! 104,000 brownshirts are massed on the Franzensfeld maneuver ground. The troops march past at the cadenced step for more than six hours, while acclamations rise from every side toward him as toward a Roman emperor. Enthusiasm reaches its peak at the moment when Hitler presents 24 new standards to his regiments.

This will moreover be the last ceremony of this kind before the seizure of power. November and December are devoted to propaganda tours and mass meetings. At the end of 1931, the National-Socialist Party has 806,000 members.

1932 - the last year of the German Republic - opens under dark auspices. The statistics show more than 6 million unemployed. 3 billion gold marks have been distributed to them during the previous twelve months, but these subsidies are insufficient to relieve their misery. On 9 January, Brüning informs the British ambassador that Germany will no longer be able to pay reparations.

To these financial difficulties there is added, for the Chancellor, a new cause of anxiety: the Marshal's seven-year term is coming to an end and presidential elections will have to be held. Brüning fears, not without reason, the disturbances that the electoral campaign will arouse. He summons Hitler to the Chancellery and proposes to him the following transaction: his party will not insist that the elections take place; the President's mandate will be renewed by a simple vote of the Reichstag; in exchange, Brüning will hand power over to him in about a year, the time needed to liquidate the reparations problem and restore some order to German finances.

[Retained footnotes]

1. As against 389,000 at the end of the previous year.
2. According to the free trade unions, total unemployment reaches 44.6 percent of workers.
3. Schleicher, for his part, has let Rohm know that he finds the moment poorly chosen to bring Brüning down. An inter-Allied conference is going to open at Lausanne. Better to let the Chancellor settle the thorny question of reparations. Once the sponge has been passed over Allied claims, the road will be open for national reconstruction.

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But Hitler refuses. If he has succeeded in having 107 deputies elected to the Reichstag, it is precisely in order to use them. Why would he help the Chancellor strengthen his authority? Why would he allow minds to calm down, he who applies all his strength to keeping them in a state of boiling? Thus he rejects this bargaining in an open letter to Brüning, in which he expresses astonishment that the head of a republican government "consents to make so grave an infraction of democratic principles." Then, in a speech delivered at the Krone Circus in Berlin, he vigorously demands presidential elections and requires the Chancellor to yield his place if he is no longer able to govern. The Chancellor's answer is not long in coming: it is a curt "no." But his argumentation, rather weak, clearly lets it be seen that he is at bay.

On 15 February, Hindenburg officially announces that he is standing again. But - a significant fact - while in 1925 he had been the candidate of reactionary circles and the parties of the right, this time he is supported by all the parties of the left and center, from the Social Democrats to the German People's Party. For this Lutheran, to be elected thanks to Catholic votes is not very comfortable either.

For a long time, conservative circles hesitate to take a position. Finally, on 22 February, the Stahlhelm and the German-National Party announce that they will vote against Hindenburg, that they will form a "black-white-red fighting bloc," and that their candidate for the presidency will be Colonel Duesterberg, second-in-command of the Steel Helmets.

Until now the National-Socialist Party has remained silent. It has wanted to let the adversary show his cards first. Besides, a certain wavering reigns within the Party. For Goebbels, the only possible candidate is Hitler himself. But Hitler hesitates to cross swords with the octogenarian giant whose popularity radiates over the whole Reich. To challenge the victor of Tannenberg is neither pleasant nor easy, and one understands that he thinks twice before risking it.

Goebbels's Journal has preserved for us a faithful picture of Hitler's hesitations during these days. "19 January: Discussed the presidential elections with the Führer. No decision has yet been reached. I argue energetically

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in favor of his own candidacy. No other solution could be seriously envisaged. - 21 January: In the situation in which we find ourselves, there remains nothing else for us to do but present our own candidate. - 23 January: It is high time for us to show our cards. - 31 January: The Führer must make his decision Wednesday; it can no longer be in doubt. - 2 February: The Führer finally decides to put forward his own candidacy. - 9 February: The Führer is again in Berlin. New discussion on the presidential election. Everything is put back in question. - 12 February: I again evaluate with the Führer all our chances of success. The decision is finally made... The Führer has returned to Munich. The official decision is still delayed a few days. - 18 February: The eternal waiting is becoming exhausting. - 22 February: The Führer has at last given me permission to go on the attack tonight at the Sports Palace. Praise God!"

That very evening, before an overpacked hall in which the members of the western, northern, and eastern sectors of the capital are assembled, Goebbels announces Hitler's candidacy. "Immediately," he writes, "a storm of applause breaks out and continues for ten minutes. The audience stands up and howls with joy. I have the impression that the vault is going to collapse on us. People laugh and cry at the same time. Many of them have completely lost their heads. One feels, for the first time, that the people is in the process of rising again."

From the next day, the Hotel Kaiserhof, where the Party has established its headquarters in Berlin, resembles an anthill in full activity. The telephones ring without stopping. Typewriters crackle. The corridors are filled with couriers and busy militiamen: the electoral battle begins.

Two days later (25 February 1932), the National-Socialist government of Brunswick appoints Hitler councillor (Regierungsrat) at the Brunswick Legation in Berlin, which automatically confers German citizenship on him. The next day, the Reichstag sets the date of the elections for 13 March for the first

round, and 10 April for the second.

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The entire Party is on a war footing. SA, SS, Hitler Youth, motorcycle and motorcar sections, militants and speakers all contribute to the electoral campaign. A deluge of leaflets, posters, brochures, and newspapers descends on Germany. Every day Hitler speaks in a different city. On 4 March, he is in Breslau; on the 7th, at Stuttgart; on the 10th, at Godesberg; on the 11th, at Hanover. This frenzied work demands nerves proof against everything, and also a great deal of money. The Party, which is staking everything, spends without counting. Goebbels, who directs the affair, is constantly at the breach, dictating articles, making speeches, drafting circulars, and collecting funds.

At last the day of the elections arrives. "I spend the evening at home with many people," writes the chief of National-Socialist propaganda. "We listen on the radio to the results of the elections. The news filters through drop by drop. The situation is frankly bad. Toward 10 o'clock one can form an overall opinion. We are miserably beaten; a frightful prospect! We have been less mistaken in estimating our own strength than in estimating that of the adversary: he lacks only 100,000 votes to have the absolute majority."

Hindenburg in fact receives 18,550,730 votes (that is, 49.6 percent of all voters); Hitler, 11,339,285, that is, 30.1 percent; Thaelmann, the leader of the Communist Party,

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4,983,197 (13.2 percent); Duesterberg comes last: he has only 2,557,590 votes, that is, a little less than 7 percent. Then a wind of panic passes over the Party. Deeply demoralized by the result of the ballot, Goebbels telephones Hitler, who is in Munich. Would it not be better to give up the struggle and transfer their efforts to the next legislative elections? But Hitler will not hear of it. "When the first figures arrived establishing definitively the result of the ballot," writes Otto Dietrich, head of the Party's press services, who that evening was beside the Führer, "a deep discouragement seized those present... Already voices were being raised advising that the struggle be abandoned. Hitler immediately sensed the danger. There was not a minute to lose. It was midnight; the newspapers' special editions were about to come out. At the same time as the result of the election, the public, the Party,

2. As against 1,582,414 votes in 1925.

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the whole nation had to learn that Adolf Hitler did not consider himself beaten. With lightning speed the Führer dictated this communiqué: "The offensive must be resumed immediately with the utmost vigor. Once National Socialism has recognized its adversary, it does not let him go before having brought him down. I give you the order to begin at this very instant the struggle for the second round. The first electoral campaign is finished. The second begins today itself. Like the first, I shall conduct it in person."

But after the nervous tension of these last days, spirits are dulled and wills slackened. The Brüning government takes advantage of this moment of disarray to carry out searches in the offices of the NSDAP. It asserts that the police have laid hands on a plan for encircling Berlin, drawn up by the staff of the Assault Sections. By higher order, all SA and SS offices are closed.

These measures are intended to paralyze the Party. But contrary to forecasts, they give it back its fighting spirit. From 3 to 9 April, Hitler undertakes his second electoral tour - this time by airplane. In the course of these nine days, he flies over all Germany, from Königsberg to Munich, and speaks at 21 mass meetings. At last comes 10 April, the day fixed for the second round of voting. Hindenburg is elected, with 19,359,633 votes (53 percent). Hitler has gained ground. He has received 13,418,051 votes (36.8 percent), while Thaelmann is declining with 3,706,655 votes (10.2 percent). The victor of Tannenberg therefore remains at the Presidency. Hitler is beaten for the second time. But at least, this time, it is an honorable defeat. When the government learns that Hitler has received 13 million votes, it all at once becomes aware

[Retained footnotes]

1. Otto Dietrich, *Mit Hitler in die Macht*, pp. 60-63. The German-National Party withdrew, while declaring "that it would not bow before a dictatorship."

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of the scale of the danger. Decidedly, the "platform agitator" is more dangerous than was thought. A few more defeats of this kind, and he will be master of Germany. The only way to prevent him is to break his party.

General Groener, who combines the functions of Minister of the Reichswehr and Minister of the Interior, undertakes to deal him the finishing blow. On 13 April, scarcely forty-eight hours after the proclamation of the ballot, he publishes a Decree for the safeguarding of the authority of the State, paragraph 1 of which prescribes the immediate dissolution of the SA:

"All organizations of military type belonging to the NSDAP," one reads in the decree, "especially the SA and the SS, with all staff offices and services attached to them, in particular the SA offices, SA reserves, motorized battalions, marine battalions, cavalry squadrons, aviation corps, truck corps, medical corps, cadre schools, SA cantonments, and equipment depots, will be immediately dissolved.

"Although partly unarmed, these combat organizations are liable at any moment to foment coups de force. They form a private army whose very existence constitutes a State within the State and represents a permanent cause of disturbance for the civilian population..."

One can easily imagine the fury of Rohm and his collaborators on reading this ordinance. The traitor Groener, the defeatist of the council of war at Spa, the man who dared take sides in favor of signing the Treaty of Versailles - is he going to annihilate all their efforts with a mere stroke of the pen? Rohm is already speaking of marching on Berlin and sweeping away the Reichstag...

Hitler must use all his authority to restrain him. Furious, Rohm rushes to Munich, hoping to convince his chief that the moment has come to employ force. Once again, Hitler refuses.

"But what is the use of having an army, if it is to let it be dissolved without fighting?" roars Rohm.

"To unleash a coup de force at this moment would be to play the game of our adversaries," Hitler replies. "We would raise against us all at once the Marshal, the Reichswehr, and the whole working class."

"And then? We shall have to face them one day or another! Better to do it at once. Tomorrow, it will be too late..."

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Rohm reddens with anger. The dispute becomes embittered.

"To fall into illegality when we are on the eve of reaching the goal would be madness," Hitler repeats. "It is by an indirect route that Groener must be brought down, and with him the decree prescribing the dissolution of the Assault Sections."

"That is easy to say!" howls Rohm, who suddenly wonders whether the counsels of prudence Hitler is offering him are not the admission of a lack of character. "You underestimate the force you have in your hands. I shall not allow the instrument I have forged to be destroyed..."

"Be silent and carry out my orders," Hitler replies in a hoarse voice. "You are going to dissolve the SA as Groener requires. As for the rest, I shall take charge of it."

Rohm finally bows. He transmits the order of dissolution to the Assault Sections. They obey him while gnashing their teeth. But the former chief of the Kampfbund comes away from this interview with a feeling of uneasiness. His confidence is shaken.

That same evening, Hitler goes to Berlin, where he has several secret interviews with Göring and Himmler.

The next day, Schleicher informs the Führer that he dissociates himself from Groener's policy, and there is no doubt that he has let his feelings be known to the Marshal's entourage, for on 15 April Hindenburg asks Groener to prescribe an inquiry into the Reichsbanner and to apply to it the same treatment as to the Hitlerian Assault Sections.

Groener is stupefied by the Marshal's request. Is it not the Reichsbanner that supported his candidacy? And what common measure can there be between Mr. Horsing's republican organization, which is working to defend the regime, and Rohm's Assault Sections, which strive to overthrow it? Thus he refuses to strike at the Reichsbanner and declares that he cannot associate himself with the Marshal's request. What is more, on 4 May he promulgates two new decrees, the first of which specifies that all political organizations having a structure or activity modeled on that of the army will henceforth be subject to the control of the Minister of the Interior.

This time it is too much, for this last decree targets not

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only the NSDAP but also the Stahlhelm, which the Reichswehr is resolved not to allow to be touched.

"Now," writes Goebbels, "nothing remains but to let the mines laid by Hitler during his last passage through Berlin explode."

On 9 May, the Reichstag meets under Göring's presidency. He opens the sitting with a violent indictment against Groener and asks "whether the Minister of the Reichswehr is still qualified to ensure public security and direct the army."

On the 11th, Brüning intervenes in the debate and delivers a river-like speech to save his collaborator. Drawing up the balance sheet of the results obtained during the last weeks, he asks the deputies to maintain their confidence in him, and affirms that his government "is only a hundred meters from the goal."

But these last hundred meters he will not cover. On 12 May, although the Reichstag has rejected, by 287 votes to 257, a motion of no confidence against the government, General Groener suddenly resigns. What has happened?

Groener has not been overthrown by Parliament, but by an extra-parliamentary intervention. A secret emissary from the Ministry of the Reichswehr went to the Presidency and revealed to the Marshal that Groener had just had a child "outside the bonds of marriage." The Marshal's rigorism reared up before this scandal.

"Under these conditions," the emissary continued, "the Minister of the Reichswehr can no longer enjoy the army's respect..."

"Obviously," Hindenburg answers, "obviously..." in a gruff tone.

"It seems impossible to us, under these conditions, that he should continue to exercise his present functions..."

"That is also my opinion," answers the Marshal, who is not displeased to be rid of a man for whom he has never felt anything but mediocre esteem.

After this, the generals informed Groener of the Marshal's disapproval - and Groener had nothing left but to leave the ministry.

This step by the military chiefs makes it possible to measure the power of the Reichswehr and the impotence of the Reichstag.

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It is the first time since the Kapp Putsch that the army has dissociated itself from its representative

within the Cabinet. Faithful to the principle stated by Hammerstein that "the army cannot itself exercise power, but that it can at will support or overthrow a government," the General Staff makes its return into the political arena by obliging the Minister of the Reichswehr to relinquish his functions. After Noske, Lüttwitz; after Lüttwitz, Groener...

This resignation puts the Cabinet in an untenable situation. Brüning, who is in Geneva, sees his credit shaken. On his return to Berlin, he is received by Hindenburg, who tells him bluntly that he will no longer sign new decree-laws.

"It is necessary," he adds, "that this unpopular government disappear as quickly as possible. My conscience obliges me to separate from you."

How could Brüning govern without the Marshal's support? He does not have a sufficient majority in the Reichstag to dispense with having recourse to Article 48. Since the President refuses to sign new decrees, he has nothing left but to go away. Within fifteen days, Groener's resignation brings about the fall of the Cabinet. Thus collapses the last parliamentary government of republican Germany.

* * *

The government that succeeds it, formed by Mr. von Papen, is a "presidential" Cabinet in the sense that it will govern not in the name of a Reichstag majority, but by relying exclusively on Marshal Hindenburg. The Ministry of the Interior is occupied by Baron von Gayl; that of Foreign Affairs by Baron von Neurath; that of Finance by Count Schwerin von Krosyck. Dr. Gürtner

[Retained footnotes]

1. "I was part of the General Staff at the time," writes Colonel Meyer, "and we all knew about the incident. Groener had devoted a book to General Moltke (the one of 1914), whose strategy he criticized and which he had entitled Commander-in-Chief In Spite of Himself. Speaking among ourselves, we called Groener: Father In Spite of Himself."

2. "Although Brüning succumbed to the intrigues of the [German] nationalists," writes Walter Lippmann, "what undermined his power and made these intrigues possible is the fact that France, Great Britain, and the United States showed themselves incapable of performing a single constructive act with a view to restoring international confidence." (New York Herald Tribune, 1 June 1932.)

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becomes Minister of Justice; finally, General von Schleicher succeeds Groener at the Ministry of the Reichswehr. With this "Cabinet of barons," it is the German-National circles that take power.

"Brüning," Henri Lichtenberger very rightly writes, "had treated the Hitlerians as subversive revolutionaries, who are kept out of the Reichswehr, whose formations are dissolved, who are forbidden to wear uniforms and to demonstrate on the public highway. This, in the eyes of the new rulers, is an injustice and a blunder... What is needed, on the contrary, is to associate the National Socialists with the exercise of power, to put them with their backs to the wall in order to force them to show the measure of their capacities. To arrive at this result is one of the essential tasks that the von

Papen Cabinet sets itself: it intends no longer to block the road to National Socialism, but to integrate it into the whole of German political life."

However, Hitler, whose 107 deputies can oppose the investiture of the new government, accepts its creation only on two conditions: 1) Papen will dissolve the Reichstag and proceed to new elections; 2) he will rescind Groener's decree prohibiting the SA. On these two points, the new Chancellor agrees to satisfy Hitler.

On 4 June, Hindenburg signs a decree promulgating the dissolution of the Reichstag. The date of the new elections is fixed for 31 July. On 17 June, Groener's decree is rescinded, as are the orders forbidding the SA to wear uniforms and take part in public demonstrations.

Now it is the Communists' turn to show their anger. "The restoration of the SA is a true provocation to murder," cries Thaelmann during a meeting of the Antifascist League. Everywhere the Red Front redoubles its activity; unrest resumes in Hamburg and Berlin. On 10 July, bloody collisions occur almost everywhere between SA commandos and antifascist militiamen. There are 18 dead and more than 200 seriously wounded. On 17 July, scenes of violence are renewed, principally in Altona and in the suburbs of Hamburg; this time there are 19 dead and 285 wounded. "We are going straight toward civil war," writes Goebbels, "...but Wilhelmstrasse seems to suspect nothing."

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To tell the truth, this ministry composed of men of the world and brilliant horsemen does not sin by excess of perspicacity. Besides, all its attention is monopolized by the chaotic situation reigning in Prussia.

In the elections to the Prussian Landtag of 24 April 1931, the National-Socialist Party had obtained 162 mandates out of 422. Finding itself in the minority, the Socialist Braun-Severing Cabinet had resigned, and the Landtag had elected the National Socialist Kerrl as president. But, owing to the persistent disagreement between the Center and the National Socialists, any designation of a new president of the Council had become impossible, because no candidate could assemble the absolute majority required by law. The Landtag is literally ungovernable, and the former Braun Cabinet, although resigned, continues to dispatch current affairs while awaiting the formation of a new ministry.

This paradoxical situation provokes growing tension among the Landtag factions. On 28 May, a true brawl breaks out in the chamber. A Communist deputy having slapped a National-Socialist deputy, a pitched battle is unleashed with chairs and inkwells. Eight deputies are gravely wounded and the session hall is completely wrecked. It is obvious that such a situation cannot be prolonged indefinitely.

On 19 July, Mr. Kerrl, president of the Landtag, addresses a letter to the Chancellor and summons him "in the name of the will of the people" to put an end to this scandal and to transfer Prussian administration and police to the Reich.

The next day, making use of Article 48, Marshal Hindenburg appoints von Papen Reich Commissioner in Prussia. By virtue of this decree, von Papen is authorized "to put the members of the Prussian Cabinet on leave, to assume himself the functions of president of the Council, and to entrust to persons of his choice the charge of the different ministries."

[Retained footnotes]

2. It previously had only 6.

3. Deputy Kerrl was elected with the addition of Center votes.

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Von Papen designates Dr. Bracht, mayor of Essen, to serve as his permanent representative within the Prussian ministry, and relieves Messrs. Braun and Severing of their functions. They refuse to evacuate the premises and declare that they will yield only to force. To get out of this impasse, it is necessary to have recourse to the Reichswehr.

That same evening, Marshal Hindenburg promulgates the state of exception in Prussia and hands executive power to General von Rundstedt, commander of Wehrkreis III. The ministry buildings are occupied by infantry detachments. All ministers are invited to leave their offices. Since Messrs. Grzesinski, police prefect, Weiss, vice-president, and Herrmannsberg, commander of the Berlin security police, persist in their refusal, they are arrested and taken under escort to Moabit prison. The Reichsbanner and the Red Front, which had threatened, the one to raise the population, the other to unleash the general strike, do not move before the bayonets of the Reichswehr soldiers. Moreover, General von Rundstedt has taken very severe measures to repress any possible disorder. By evening, the affair is completely liquidated.

But if Berlin has watched without reacting the eviction of the Socialist ministry, the governments of the southern states rise up against a method that they fear may be applied to them in turn. On 21 July, the dismissed ministers lodge a complaint before the Supreme Court of Leipzig, in order to have the appointment of a Reich Commissioner in Prussia declared illegal. And although it is unlikely that a state tribunal would pronounce so grave a condemnation against the executive power, Bavaria, Württemberg, Baden, and Hesse make common cause with them. Von Papen has to convoke urgently at Stuttgart a Conference of the Länder and declare that he does not envisage extending to other states the measures taken in Prussia, in order to calm their apprehensions somewhat.

Meanwhile, the date of the Reichstag elections approaches. The electoral campaign is again in full swing.

[Retained footnotes]

1. Ordinance of the President of the Reich for the restoration of public security and order in Berlin and in the province of Brandenburg (20 July 1932).

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From 15 to 30 July, Hitler flies over Germany by airplane, speaking in about sixty cities. And this time the elections are a triumph for the National Socialists. The NSDAP wins 230 mandates (as against 107

in the preceding elections). It thereby becomes not only the first party of the new Reichstag, but "the most powerful party that has ever existed in Germany."

With his 13,700,000 voters, his 1,200,000 members, and his 350,000 brownshirts, Hitler is at the gates of the Chancellery. Will they open before him?

[Retained footnotes]

1. The distribution of seats after the elections of 31 July is as follows: National-Socialist Party (NSDAP), 230; Social-Democratic Party (SPD), 133; Communist Party (KPD), 89; Center, 75; German-National Party (DNVP), 40; Bavarian People's Party (BVP), 22; German People's Party (DVP), 7. (See the table, p. 98.)

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THE FINAL ASSAULT (1 August 1932-30 January 1933)

"Everyone believed that Hitler's hour had finally struck," writes Otto Dietrich. All eyes turn toward the Kaiserhof, headquarters of the National Socialists, situated scarcely a hundred meters from the Chancellery, but Hitler is not there. He has withdrawn to his house at the Obersalzberg, near Berchtesgaden, to meditate there on the problems of the seizure of power.

For about ten days, neither the Chancellery nor the Presidency gives any sign of life. Finally, on 11 August, a telephone call from Berlin asks the Führer to come to the capital to discuss the formation of a new Cabinet. Hitler replies that he will be there on the 13th, in the morning.

After holding a last conference with the Party's political leaders, whom he has convoked for the 12th at Prien, near the Chiemsee, Hitler sets out. Everything has been foreseen for the seizure of power: the SA concentrate around Berlin in formations ever more numerous.

On 13 August, at dawn, Hitler arrives by car in the outskirts of Potsdam, where he has arranged to meet Rohm. The Führer and his chief of staff make a rapid survey of the situation. In Berlin everything is calm. The SA are in their cantonments, but ready to move at the first signal.

Toward 10 o'clock, Hitler goes to the Ministry of the Reichswehr, where he has a brief interview with Schleicher, then to the Chancellery, where von Papen is waiting for him.

The latter explains to him the intentions of his government. Von

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Papen will remain Chancellor; Hitler will receive the post of Vice-Chancellor; the National Socialists will be given a few portfolios of secondary importance, but the direction of policy as well as the principal levers of command will remain in the hands of the present government. "In sum," writes Otto

Dietrich, "it is a question of harnessing the National-Socialist Party to the cart of the old Cabinet, but without giving it the possibility of directing affairs." Hitler categorically rejects this bastard compromise and declares that under these conditions it is useless for him to go to the President. In the grip of lively anger, he cuts the conversation short and withdraws to the Kaiserhof.

At noon, State Secretary Meissner informs Deputy Frick, head of the Reichstag parliamentary group, that the Marshal has not yet settled on any definitive solution. Toward 3 o'clock, a new telephone call: the President wishes to speak to Hitler before pronouncing. Under these conditions, a glimmer of hope remains. The Führer goes to the Presidency, where he is received by Hindenburg. He explains to him that, being the head of the largest faction in the Reichstag, it falls to him to form the new Cabinet. He does not claim "the totality of power," as has been alleged, but "the unequivocal direction of the ministry," which is very different. The Marshal listens to him with an icy air and refuses to give him satisfaction. Once again the talks are broken off, and this time definitively.

Returned to the Kaiserhof, Hitler dictates to Goebbels an account of the talks. Then he informs the SA chiefs. "It is for them," writes Goebbels, "that the news is most bitter. Who knows whether they will still be able to remain masters of their formations? Nothing is more difficult than to tell a troop already sure of victory that it has just escaped them."

But while Hitler is explaining these facts to his lieutenants, the Chancellery services draft and distribute to the press a communiqué presenting events in a tendentious light. An hour later, the newspapers spread it among the public with sensational headlines: Hitler demands all power for himself! - An exorbitant demand!

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- The Marshal sharply puts him in his place!

And naturally, the public accepts on trust the version it is given. In the eyes of the people, 13 August is "a black day for the NSDAP." Even within the Führer's entourage, minds give themselves over to pessimism. People murmur that the game is lost, that the President will never charge Hitler with forming a ministry. And the next day, speaking at Heiligendamm on the Baltic Sea, Goebbels observes that the wave of discouragement has reached even the sections most distant from the capital.

Hitler alone keeps his calm. "Far from being depressed," notes Otto Dietrich, "he is relaxed as if he had just escaped a trap." To become Vice-Chancellor in a bourgeois Cabinet seems to him an offer too ridiculous to be considered. "I prefer to be the besieger rather than the besieged," he says to his friends. Von Papen wanted to "integrate him into German politics," but as a minor placed under the guardianship of the parties of the right. Before this proposal of the Chancellor, only one attitude is possible: to stiffen desperately and refuse all conversation. They will see well enough which of the two wears out first.

For it is indeed a war of attrition that now begins between von Papen and Hitler. Buried are the promises and oaths exchanged at Harzburg, which the struggle for the Presidency had already singularly cooled. The duel opening between the National Socialists and the spokesmen of reaction will continue until the complete defeat of the latter. The divorce is consummated between the NSDAP and the German-National Party, between the brown Front of the SA and the gray Front of the Stahlhelm.

Only Schleicher strives not to break all the bridges, "which," Goebbels remarks, "is quite in his nature."

On 28 August, at Münster, von Papen opens hostilities with a very violent speech:

"The unrestrained intemperance expressed in the proclamations of the leader of the National-Socialist Movement," he declares,

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"is incompatible with his claims to leadership of the State. I deny him the right to identify with the whole of the German nation the minority of partisans grouped behind his flags, and to treat the rest of his compatriots like game that one hunts."

Three days later, at the Sports Palace in Berlin, Hitler answers von Papen with no less violence. He points out that the Chancellor is very ill placed to treat as a "minority" a party that has 230 seats in the Reichstag, and declares that he will not leave the arena before being victorious.

"My will is unshakable," he says in conclusion, "for my breath is longer than that of my adversaries. If they imagine that between them and us there is a possible basis of collaboration, I can only answer them: you are mistaken, for you live in the Germany of the past, and we in the Germany of the future."

To blunt the effect of these words, 150,000 members of the Stahlhelm from all regions of the Reich parade on 2 September in the Lustgarten of Berlin. But this demonstration scarcely strengthens the Cabinet's position; no more than the ordinance of 4 September For activating the revival of economic life, which is a mere deflationary program.

Day after day, the government sees the number of its supporters melt away. Its lack of new ideas, its maladroitness and often contradictory measures, finish by disconcerting opinion. Yet it does not realize its growing isolation; or if it realizes it, it affects to oppose to it a haughty indifference.

On 12 September there is a dramatic sitting in the Reichstag. The agenda includes a speech by the Chancellor, to which the Communists intend to reply with a demand for the annulment of the ordinance For activating the revival of economic life and by a vote of no confidence in the government. The Chancellor takes his place on the ministers' bench, ostentatiously carrying a red morocco-leather portfolio containing the decree dissolving the Reichstag. This has been signed in advance by the Marshal, to allow the Chancellor to avoid being placed in the minority in the event that the debates take an unfavorable turn. Von Papen therefore feels himself master of the situation.

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He delivers his speech with great ease. Then, after a few interpellations, Göring, who acts as president of the Reichstag, suspends the sitting to allow the various parties to consult. At the end of this pause, Göring reopens the sitting and declares that he will proceed immediately to the vote on the motions presented. Papen, caught short, again asks to speak, but Göring refuses him the floor, alleging that this would be contrary to the rules, since the Assembly has already begun to vote.

Furious, Papen places the red morocco portfolio on the presidential desk and leaves the session hall. But without being disturbed either by the Chancellor's departure or by the placing of the red portfolio there, Göring finishes conducting the ballot. The result of the vote brings Papen the most stinging parliamentary defeat that has ever been seen. The decree For activating the revival of economic life is rejected, and the motion of no confidence in the Cabinet is adopted by 513 votes to 32.

32 votes out of 545: that is all that remains to the government whose chief, only a few days before, declared to Jules Sauerwein, the special correspondent of *Le Matin*: "I represent all the German national forces, which none of my predecessors could say. My person guarantees to you that if I sign an agreement, it is all Germany that signs it with me!"

Immediately after proclaiming the result of the ballot, Göring reads the dissolution decree. Von Papen, having returned to the chamber, points out that the Reichstag's vote is null and void, since the dissolution decree had previously been placed on the President's desk. Göring answers that, on the contrary, it is the dissolution decree that is illegal, since it was read after the vote and consequently emanates from an overthrown government. President Hindenburg has to settle the dispute, and one cannot be surprised if he sides with von Papen's thesis. The Reichstag

[Footnotes in source text]

1. Joseph Goebbels, op. cit., p. 162.

2. Declarations of Mr. von Papen to Stéphane Lauzanne during the Lausanne Conference. "This declaration," Paul Schmidt tells us, "had raised a general outcry in the National-Socialist press as in the newspapers of the left, so that Papen had had to deny it." (*Statist auf Diplomatischer Bühne*, p. 244.)

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remains dissolved; the decree For activating the revival of economic life is maintained; and the new elections are fixed for 6 November. It is therefore the Chancellor who ultimately prevails. But it is a Pyrrhic victory, for the Reichstag vote has demonstrated to the country that his government rests on no solid base. The National Socialists have taken their revenge for the humiliation of 13 August.

This revenge is even more complete than they thought. For scarcely has von Papen been put in the minority before the Reichstag when he suffers a second setback before the Prussian Landtag.

One remembers that the Prussian ministers dismissed by the Chancellor had brought the affair before the Supreme Court of Justice of Leipzig. On 25 October, the Supreme Court delivers its verdict. It is a true judgment of Solomon:

"The Ordinance promulgated by the President of the Reich," declares the Court, "is in conformity with the Constitution insofar as it appoints a Reich Commissioner in Prussia, gives him the right provisionally to relieve the ministers of their functions, and to transfer these functions to other persons of his choice.

"It departs from it insofar as it prevents the regularly elected Prussian ministers from representing their

Land in the Reichstag, in the Reichsrat, in the Landtag, or in any one of the popular assemblies."

In other words, von Papen has the right to exercise power in the place of the ministers. They nonetheless remain invested with their functions and cannot be dismissed.

The decision of the Supreme Court is perhaps a masterpiece of casuistry. But from the political point of view it results in this absurd situation: two legal governments coexist in Prussia. One is merely provisional and holds effective power, since it makes the administrative machine work (the Reich Commissariat); the other remains in office without any limitation of duration, while being stripped of the direction of affairs (the Socialist Cabinet). One can easily imagine

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the disturbance that this ambiguous solution brings into the administration of Prussia. For Papen, it makes any act of authority impossible. As for Hitler, it confirms for him the necessity of ridding Germany as quickly as possible of the federal system, to substitute for it a strongly centralized regime.

While the Prussian imbroglio turns into tragicomedy, the social problem takes on an increasingly acute character. On 3 November, all employees of the Berlin transport companies go on strike to protest against the lowering of their wages. There are no more tramways, buses, or subway. Without hesitation, the National-Socialist Party takes sides with the strikers. "It is a matter of showing the working class," writes Goebbels, "that our struggle against reaction is sincere and that we want to finish with bourgeois methods. This decision will frighten moderate circles. But that has no importance. We shall easily win them back. Whereas if one loses the workers, one loses them forever."

Immediately the strike reaches a degree of unheard-of violence. Rails are torn up in the streets, tramcars are overturned and burned. The police intervene several times: an SA man is killed by an officer during a brawl. In a few hours, the National Socialists have everywhere taken the direction of the movement.

But the turn taken by events is not at all pleasing to the Communist Party. What does a strike, even a victorious one, matter to it if it is not the beneficiary? In the face of the energetic intervention of the SA, the leaders of the Red unions give their members the order to return to work and to accept the wage reductions imposed by the employers. In doing so, they deal a serious blow to the working class. The strike declines and stops. The resigned workers return to their workshops. But the Communist Party has proved that it uses social troubles only for political ends, not to improve the lot of workers.

[Footnote in source text]

1. An attempt at conciliation made with President Braun - moreover rejected by the latter - and the appointment of Dr. Bracht to the functions of Reich Minister without portfolio, bring no remedy to the situation.

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And while each day sees the number of bankruptcies and suicides increase, a new electoral campaign breaks over the country exhausted by hunger and despair.

Once again, Germany is submerged by a deluge of posters and brochures, leaflets and proclamations. Once again, Hitler flies over the Reich by airplane and speaks in about fifty cities; once again, all the organs of the Party work at full output. SA and SS, speakers and militants are everywhere at the breach. But this time Goebbels and his collaborators have more difficulty than before in galvanizing the crowds. Harassed by the incessant struggles of the last five years, the voters are beginning to have enough of it. Neither the most incendiary speeches nor the most exalted watchwords fanaticize them as before.

It is on this apathy that von Papen counts. It is his great trump card in the war of attrition that he is waging against Hitler. He knows that one cannot remain indefinitely in opposition, and that faith, even the blindest, needs some beginning of realization. "If the elections of 6 November cost the NSDAP as many mandates as voter fatigue already allows one to foresee," writes Walther Schotte, "if certain factions, like the German-National Party, succeed in gaining points, then the psychosis created by Hitler will be broken. The 13 million voters who voted for him on 31 July will recover themselves and go where they ought to go. The parties must know it: the hour of their exclusive domination is past. They must submit to the government's requirements. And if they refuse? Well, the government will dissolve Parliament once more."

As for handing power over to the National Socialists, there is no question of it. "No, no, that is not the task suited to the Hitlers, the Strassers, the Görings, the Fricks, whatever their names may be. They are no doubt fiery temperaments, capable of stirring the crowds

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and even of leading them, but incapable of assuming political responsibilities."

It is along a quite different path that Papen wants to lead the country. "What we lack," he writes, "is not a national opposition, but a conservative opposition," a grouping of great families conscious of their responsibilities, as exists in England - the Chamberlains, the Derbys, the Churchills, the Cecils, etc. - accustomed from father to son to directing public affairs. What Germany lacks is an Upper House, capable of containing the excesses of the Reichstag. But contrary to what happens in England, von Papen would like this grouping to have a confessional character. "German conservatism will be Christian, or it will not be," he declares, and by "Christian," von Papen naturally means "Catholic."

It is here that this Rhenish aristocrat differs from the Lutheran Junkers born east of the Elbe. A former member of the Center, which he had vainly tried to detach from socialism, he dreams of a new party whose adherents would group themselves under the double symbol of the Eagle and the Cross. To the racist neo-paganism of Rosenberg and his emulators, he tries to oppose a Christian neo-Germanism. "The people, the Reich, and the States," he proclaims in concluding his great Munich speech, "must collaborate to reconstruct the new Germany. May the guiding idea of the Sacrum Imperium, the indestructible idea of the Holy German Empire, spread through all German lands, from the Alps to Memel! Forward, with Hindenburg, for a new Germany!"

The result of the elections confirms, up to a certain point, the Chancellor's forecasts. The German-

National Party progresses slightly, passing from 40 to 52 seats, while the National Socialists are in retreat. They have lost more than two million votes and now have only 196 seats in the Reichstag instead of 230.

The consequences of this ebb are not long in making themselves

[Retained footnotes]

1. Id., *ibid.*, p. 42.

2. Article by von Papen in the Ring of 6 October 1929. The article would deserve [further note in source incomplete].

3. See the correspondence between von Papen and Msgr. Kaas, leader of the Center Party. Msgr. Kaas's socialist tendencies finally prevailed over von Papen's conservative theories.

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felt. Frightened by the demagogic violence of Goebbels's speeches and by the participation of the National Socialists in the transport strike, many industrialists refuse to continue feeding their propaganda fund. Soon the Party's cash boxes are dry. Debts accumulate. Money worries and anxiety over forthcoming due dates return like a leitmotif in Goebbels's Journal. It is necessary to have recourse to heroic remedies: the members of the Assault Sections must go down into the street and beg, cap in hand, "for the wicked National Socialists," while Göring leaves precipitately for Rome to ask Mussolini for subsidies...

Rohm, for his part, begins to show signs of impatience. The old difference of opinion reappears, the one that since 1924 has never ceased to set him against Hitler. For him, the "legal conquest of power" is an absurdity. One does not take possession of a country with ballots, and all these successive elections do nothing but exhaust the Party's forces. Since the SA exist, since the movement has an army of four hundred thousand men, why persist in not using it? The brownshirts chafe at the bit and pine away in expectation. Their compressed ardor cannot be satisfied with verbal demonstrations. A single resort to force, and Hitler will be master; a single order from his mouth, and tomorrow he will be Chancellor!

But Hitler continues to oppose the arguments of his chief of staff. Until the end he will refuse to resort to illegality. He wants to accede to power without violating the Constitution, and he is sure of achieving it - it is no longer anything but a question of months, perhaps weeks. Papen will collapse sooner or later, as Brüning and Müller have collapsed. The whole thing is to hold on until then, to be patient still...

Besides, despite the financial difficulties and the reverse suffered in the last elections, the Party's moral situation is not as bad as it appears. The support given to the strikers frightened the moderates? What does it matter! It has put the Movement back "on its true axis." It is the government, on the contrary, that has lost the game, for it finds itself, whatever it claims, in desperate isolation.

This time Papen himself realizes it. He tries to broaden his Cabinet, but runs up against the hostility of almost all Reichstag factions. On 13 November,

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weary of the struggle, he seeks to reopen negotiations with Hitler. But despite the pressure exerted by Strasser, who fears never being a minister if the Führer remains in his positions, Hitler evades the talks. He refused to become Vice-Chancellor in the von Papen Cabinet when the latter was at the height of power. He is not going to consent to it on the eve of its fall.

Yet Papen still clings on. It is only following a step taken by Schleicher that he understands the uselessness of his efforts. The Minister of the Reichswehr does not hide his apprehensions from him: although he is sure of the army, it would be imprudent to stretch the rope to excess. Since power is no longer in the Reichstag, one must go to seek it where it is, that is to say, in the masses. Failing a parliamentary majority impossible to assemble, it would be better to sketch a movement toward the left, to extend a hand to the workers' unions, and thus recover a popular base.

But that is a policy Papen cannot permit himself, for his decrees have raised the country against him. On 17 November, he brings his resignation to the President.

It is not without regret that the old Marshal sees leave a collaborator to whom deep sympathy bound him. All these men who collapse around him in recent months increase his feeling of solitude. Perhaps he thinks again of the tragic days of November 1918, when he was alone in standing up to the storm, in supporting the edifice of the tottering Empire. Now the Republic collapses in its turn between his hands, and he is still alone in bearing the burden of power. But now he is fifteen years older and his strength declines. Before taking leave of von Papen, he gives him his photograph, at the bottom of which he writes this melancholy dedication: "I had a comrade..."

Now that von Papen has gone, Hindenburg turns for a second time toward Hitler. On 21 November, the Marshal summons the leader of the National-Socialist Movement and proposes that he form the new government. But it must not have a "presidential" character. It will be a Cabinet based on a parliamentary majority. However, the President attaches certain

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reservations to his proposal: Hitler will change nothing in the situation created by von Papen in Prussia.

Now the parliamentary parties, sounded out by Göring, have declared themselves ready to support the new combination only if Hitler undertakes to settle the Prussian question in the shortest possible time. Under these conditions, the Führer is obliged to decline the Marshal's mission. One last time he asks him for authorization to form a "presidential" Cabinet. As could be foreseen, Hindenburg refuses. Once again the National Socialists collide with a closed door.

The failure of the negotiations does not surprise the Führer. Even before seeing Hindenburg, he had the impression that his step was premature. But on 27 November at Weimar he pronounces these words heavy with threats, which will not be long in being verified:

"In a few months, things will be worse than today. Then will come the hour when people will be obliged to turn to us for the third time!"

On 1 December 1932, that hour has not yet struck. After several days of consultations, Hindenburg decides to entrust the formation of the new government to the Minister of the Reichswehr of the former von Papen Cabinet, Major General Kurt von Schleicher.

It is then that the footlights illuminate the man whom even his friends call "a master of intrigue," and who has long played the role of eminence grise at the Ministry of the Reichswehr. Up to now we have seen him only in profile, walking with muffled steps in the corridors of the Presidency and careful to remain in a half-shadow favorable to the complexity of his designs. Now that events force him to show himself in full daylight, let us try to scrutinize the traits of this enigmatic man.

On what does the exceptional position he occupies depend? By what paths has he come to enjoy an authority all the more formidable because it is most often exercised in hidden fashion?

[Retained footnotes]

1. This time, the talks had continued in writing in the form of an exchange of confidential letters. As soon as the negotiations were broken off, Goebbels published the full texts in the Party newspapers, to prevent the Chancellery from falsifying their meaning and to avoid the return of a surprise similar to that of 13 August. This publication provoked a storm of protests.

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With the exception of a short period when he commanded a battalion at the front, Kurt von Schleicher spent his whole career in the offices of the General Staff. A collaborator of Ludendorff at GHQ in Spa, then political adviser to Groener and Hindenburg, it was he whom military circles designated to negotiate with Ebert on the eve of the fighting before the Imperial Palace. It was he who suggested to Groener that Majors von Hammerstein and von Stockhausen be placed with Noske, to assist him in his struggle against the Spartacists. It was he who continued to play, with Noske after the signing of the Treaty of Versailles and with Gessler after the Kapp Putsch, the role of man of confidence and negotiator. Without ever being seen to intervene in person, one feels his invisible influence hovering over their decisions, and there is no doubt that the surprising continuity of their policy is due, in large part, to his presence and his counsel. Finally, it is he who, under Seeckt's orders, organizes the state of exception of 1923-1924.

Groener's return to the Ministry of the Reichswehr strengthens his situation still further. And when in February 1929 Chancellor Müller appoints him under-secretary of state at the Ministry of the Reichswehr, Schleicher finds himself placed at one of the most important strategic points of German political life.

From this observatory where he dominates the melee of the parties, he can weave his web in all directions. From this central position, which corresponds perfectly to the demands of his temperament, he is at the point of intersection of two essential currents: where the army bites into political life, and where politics penetrates the army. "From this point," writes Walther Schotte, "Schleicher could extend his influence over all the leaders of the Reich."

For as Under-Secretary of State at the Ministry of the Reichswehr, he serves as the link between the army and the government, between the government and the Presidency; he is not

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only the minister's permanent adviser, but sometimes that of the Chancellor and often that of the Marshal.

By virtue of his functions, Schleicher sees Hindenburg almost daily. Charged with making to him a report on the military situation, is it surprising that they come to speak of politics and to review all the decisions of the Cabinet? Is it surprising if this daily contact gradually changes into a sort of intimacy that Schleicher's suppleness of mind and brilliant conversation finally make very agreeable to the Marshal? Let us add to this that Schleicher had been an officer in the regiment Hindenburg commanded before the war and of which his son Oskar is currently a member, which creates among the three men an additional bond that allows a German polemicist to say: "With Schleicher, it is not even the army that governs us; it is the officers of the 3rd Guards Regiment!"

But alas, what Machiavellian procedures has Schleicher not used to arrive there! It is by continual about-faces and recoveries that he has known how to extricate himself from many perilous situations and preserve the confidence of the ministries that have succeeded one another in power since 1919. Socialist with some, reactionary with others, smiling on everyone but giving himself to no one, there is scarcely any appointment among the leading personnel on which Schleicher has not been called to give his opinion. When in October 1926 General von Seeckt enters into conflict with Mr. Gessler over the enlistment of Prince Wilhelm of Hohenzollern, Schleicher advises Hindenburg to accept the resignation of the chief of the Heeresleitung and to appoint General Heye in his place. In October 1929, he obtains the entrusting of the direction of the Truppenamt to his friend General von Hammerstein, whom he had once placed with Noske. A year later (October 1930), he has him appointed in turn chief of the Heeresleitung, thus strengthening his influence over the army.

The same tactic is used toward the civil government. When in March 1930 Hindenburg wants to hand the decree dissolving the Reichstag to Chancellor Müller, Groener, advised by Schleicher, threatens to resign. The Marshal immediately renounces dissolving Parliament, which brings about, by counterblow, the fall of the ministry. In April 1932, Schlei-

[Footnote in source text]

1. Cf. the article by Kurt Reibnitz in the Dortmunder Generalanzeiger of [source text continues on following page or is incomplete here].

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cher insists with Groener that he prohibit the Assault Sections. Forty-eight hours later, he declares that the prohibition decree "is one of the greatest stupidities the government has committed," and dissociates himself from Brüning as soon as he feels that opinion is turning against him.

Schleicher then suggests to Hindenburg that power be entrusted to von Papen, and he himself becomes Minister of the Reichswehr in the new combination. But when he sees that Papen has lost the game, he drops him in turn in order to negotiate with the Socialist and Christian unions.

Thus electing the commanders-in-chief, making and unmaking chancellors and ministers, intoxicated by the rapidity of his rise and proud of his reputation as an invincible conspirator, Schleicher from then on sees no limit to his ambitions.

"That is indeed," writes Walther Schotte, "a political career. The soldier has become a politician, and nevertheless the politician has remained a soldier." It would even be more exact to say "tactician." For in Schleicher's mind, politics is only a game of chess in which one pushes one's pawns. What interests him are by no means social and economic problems - and still less conflicts of ideas - but solely the action and reaction of the forces present. "Everywhere that one discerns something moving," writes Walther Schotte, "the politician Schleicher awakens and the soldier intervenes." Not with the thick fist of a trooper, but with the light hand of a fencer. Politics thus becomes for him a subtle and intoxicating game, which exercises an invincible fascination over his mind and from which he will not be able to abstain, even on the threshold of death.

What interests him in the National-Socialist Party is not the intrinsic value of its doctrine, which he finds absurd. It is its significance as a "factor" in German political life; it is the material reasons for its strength. Now Schleicher is convinced that this strength resides less in the personality of the Führer than in the organization of the

[Footnotes in source text]

1. Cf. Walther Schotte, *Die Regierung Papen*, Schleicher, Gayl, p. 22.
2. Walther Schotte, *op. cit.*, p. 84.

[Retained footnotes]

3. His conception of the political world rejoins that of Ludendorff, but with much less breadth. According to Max Klaus's excellent comparison, he is to the Quartermaster-General what Wagner is to Faust in Goethe's tragedy.

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Assault Sections and in the grip which the N.S.D.A.P. exerts over the masses.

If the first is the work of Röhm, the second, in his eyes, is the work of Strasser, who has known how to secure for himself the favor of the working class. Papen wanted to overthrow Hitler by tearing away from him his swastika standard and brandishing in its place the palladium of the Holy Empire. Schleicher wants to paralyze him by taking his troops from him. It is not by ideology that he expects to overcome him, but by applying to him the rules of classical strategy. While keeping contact with the General Staff of the Brown House, he will secretly try to detach Strasser from it. If the maneuver succeeds, if Strasser goes over to his camp, taking all his supporters with him, the Hitlerian structure,

struck in its vital parts, will not resist much longer...

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And Strasser does not say no... After several days of secret negotiations, he agrees to become Vice-Chancellor in the new combination that Schleicher is in the process of putting together.

When he learns of Strasser's defection, Hitler is stunned. So long as he had had to fight only against an external enemy, he had never lost confidence in the outcome of the battle. Now that the Party is threatened with a split, he feels the ground totter under his feet. Will the instrument he has forged over seven years of struggles break apart? The danger must truly have been serious, for Goebbels relates that on that day, after pacing up and down his office for hours, Hitler suddenly turned toward him and said: "If the Party collapses, I have three minutes left: one revolver shot, and my account will be settled."

It is a certain fact: those who consider that the struggle has lasted too long, that an understanding must be reached with the government, and that the Führer's intransigence risks compromising everything, are more numerous than ever. There are all Strasser's old friends, who founded with him the sections of Northern Germany and who have not forgiven Hitler for the eviction

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of their leader in 1925. There are at least half of the Nazi deputies in the Reichstag, who fear losing their mandates if new elections are held. There is finally the whole left wing of the movement, syndicalist and revolutionary in tendency, which finds that the Party is becoming bourgeois and does not look without displeasure at the negotiations conducted by Göring with the Right. Finally, as if to increase the general discouragement still further, financial difficulties grow worse, and the Thuringian elections mark a new regression. The crisis is very likely to turn into disaster.

"We now stand before the decisive test," writes Goebbels. "Every movement that wants to conquer power must undergo it sooner or later. It generally comes on the eve of final victory. To win is now a question of nerves."

On 8 December, Hitler, Goebbels, Göring, and the principal leaders of the Party meet at the Kaiserhof in secret committee. After a night of feverish deliberations, a plan is worked out to isolate the defector and circumscribe the evil. The First Organization Section, created and developed by Strasser and which he had stuffed with his trusted men, is dissolved. Part of its services passes under the orders of Ley, who becomes director of the Political Bureau. The other is annexed to the propaganda services, directed by Goebbels.

The next day, 9 December, a conference of district leaders, inspectors, and Nazi deputies is held in the offices of the presidency of the Reichstag. "Hitler," writes Goebbels, "first addresses the district leaders. He speaks to them with so much conviction and with so personal an accent that it warms our hearts. He delivers a crushing indictment against Strasser, and reveals his repeated attempts at sabotage. All the old fighters, who have been struggling for the Party for years, have tears in their eyes, from anger, sadness, and shame. The evening is a great success for the unity of the Movement. To finish, district leaders and deputies spontaneously give demonstrations of loyalism toward the Führer. All shake his hand and swear to continue the struggle at his side, even at the peril of their lives."

[Retained footnotes]

1. The N.S.D.A.P. had lost 40% of its voters there since 31 July.
2. Joseph Goebbels, *op. cit.*, p. 219.

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A few days later, all danger of a split seems averted. Strasser finds himself completely isolated: even his most faithful supporters have refused to break with Hitler. But several weeks are still needed to restore cohesion to the Party and erase the last after-effects of the crisis.

Here again, Goebbels's Journal retraces for us the vicissitudes of this uncertain period: "10 December: Opinion is still undecided among the members of the Party. Strasser's act has caused great agitation among the public... I discuss the case with the Kreis leaders. The Berlin sector remains unshakably attached to the Führer and the Party. — 12 December: I speak before the members of the Brandenburg Section. After a two-hour speech, I succeed in turning all the leaders around and swearing them anew to the Party... The same evening I go to Munich. On the way I meet the Führer, who is returning from a tour in Saxony and Breslau. His attack against the splitters has fully succeeded. Strasser has lost all along the line. — 15 December: We have the greatest difficulty keeping the S.A. in hand. It is truly time that we took power. But that cannot be thought of for the moment. — 18 December: I go to Hagen. During the journey, I have the opportunity to explain the affair in detail to a group of our deputies. They are horrified when they learn the true background of things. — 21 December: There is still much bitterness and discontent in the Party. These are the inevitable consequences of a violent internal crisis. The whole thing is to keep calm."

On 30 December, one can say that the affair has been liquidated. The alert was hot, but the Party has overcome the "decisive test." Then Hitler resumes the offensive. Schleicher wanted to steal his troops from him, but the operation has failed. It is Hitler now who turns against Schleicher and will break, one by one, all the supports available to him at the Presidency of the Reich and in Parliament.

1933 arrives. The government has only twenty-eight days left to live, but these twenty-eight days are so charged with intrigue,

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maneuvers, and secret negotiations that it is practically impossible to follow them in all their twists and turns.

On 4 January, Hitler secretly goes to Cologne, to the home of the banker Schröder, where he has a long interview with von Papen. The Führer and the former Chancellor agree to bury their grievances and reach an understanding on the broad outlines of a new ministry. This time von Papen grants to the head of the National-Socialist Party what he had refused him six months earlier: Hitler will be Chancellor, while von Papen will content himself with the post of Vice-Chancellor.

How can this sudden reconciliation be explained between two men who were proclaiming, only a short time before, that "any collaboration between them was unthinkable"? It is that both want to be done with Schleicher, and they can succeed only by combining their efforts. Papen needs Hitler in order to find a majority in the Reichstag, and Hitler needs Papen in order to remove Hindenburg's scruples and finally bring him to entrust power to him.

For the moment this agreement must remain secret. But as a result of an indiscretion, the press gets wind of the matter and noisily publishes news of the meeting.

Schleicher knows from then on that he has not a minute to lose. On 6 January, he arranges an interview for Strasser with Hindenburg and sets out to the Marshal his plans concerning a ministerial reshuffle. The Nazi Movement, Schleicher declares, is in the process of disintegrating. One can therefore form a Schleicher-Strasser cabinet of "popular front" which will rely on the left wing of the National-Socialist Party and on certain Social-Democratic elements. Strasser will be named Vice-Chancellor. The Reichstag will be dissolved and Hitler will be crushed in the next electoral battle, for Strasser will present lists of his own candidates.

But the Marshal, tired of dissolving Parliament every six months, shows no eagerness to enter into these views. All the more because von Papen, who is maneuvering behind the scenes, has let him know that he is in a position to form, with Hitler's collaboration, a cabinet of "national concentration" which will not need the support of Socialist votes and will be able to govern without dissolving the Reichstag.

Like all intriguers, Schleicher has never thought

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that his intrigues could turn back against him; no more has he taken account of the resentment of those whom he has sacrificed to his personal ambitions. Feeling his influence over the Marshal diminish, he loses his assurance, becomes troubled, and accumulates, in a few days, blunder upon blunder.

Believing that he can obtain by threat what he has not been able to obtain by persuasion, Schleicher lets the Marshal understand that it depends only on him to break up the estates of the great landowners and to reveal to the public the scandals of the Osthilfe, in which certain friends of Hindenburg are gravely compromised. But the Marshal is not accustomed to yielding to blackmail. At once, Schleicher is discredited in his mind.

Meanwhile (15 January), elections take place in the small state of Lippe-Detmold. The National-Socialists collect 39.6% of the votes, winning at one stroke 9 seats out of 21 in an Assembly in which they had until then possessed none.

These elections vividly strike Hindenburg's mind. Where are the symptoms of disintegration of which he has been told? Schleicher, too, is stunned by this ballot. Where are the thousands of supporters whom Strasser was supposed to bring him? Furious at having miscalculated, he immediately detaches himself from Hitler's former lieutenant, whom he had loaded with attentions a week earlier.

All the ground that Schleicher loses is gained for Papen. On 20 January, Hindenburg lets him know that he is ready to accept his combination, on condition that it is a cabinet of "national concentration" in the

full meaning of the term, and that the German-National Party is represented in it.

At once, von Papen gets in touch with Seldte, the leader of the Steel Helmets, and Meissner, the Secretary of State at the Presidency, while Göring enters into negotiations with the right-wing fractions. But Hugenberg and the leaders of the German-National Party show themselves recalcitrant. "They continue to put forward unacceptable pretensions," writes Gerhard Rühle, "and have not yet understood that they have lost the game."

[Retained footnotes]

1. Presided over by M. von Oldenburg-Januschau, the Osthilfe, or Eastern Aid, had as its object to come to the aid of great landowners struck by the crisis. But the sums paid out were very often used for quite other purposes than the equipping of the estates, and these abuses greatly displeased the peasants.

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Yet they have only to look at the country to see the disastrous results of their policy: the number of unemployed exceeds six million and bankruptcy is at the gates of the Reich. Everywhere social agitation redoubles in intensity; everywhere the red cells arm themselves for insurrection. In Berlin, Leipzig, Hamburg, Frankfurt, bands of unemployed workers pillage food shops and food depots. Brawls and riots multiply in the industrial regions, and alarming rumors circulate concerning an imminent general strike in the Ruhr. This state of things is all the more alarming in that it is accompanied by a sort of divorce between the army and the police. The first is subject to the authority of the minister of the Reichswehr. But the second depends on the governments of the Länder. Now these, in majority Socialist, are hostile to the government of the Empire since it appointed a Reich Commissioner in Prussia. This lack of coordination between the two instruments of power is eminently favorable to an extremist coup de force...

Meanwhile Schleicher, who talks of making "heads roll," turns like a wild beast in a cage that is becoming more and more narrow. On 24 January, the Reichstag meets against his will. The Right, frightened by the negotiations opened by the minister of the Reichswehr with the workers' unions, reproaches him for his collusion with the parties of the Left.

"Do you then believe," cries Schleicher in exasperation, "that the Reichswehr must always be on the side of the capitalists?"

This unfortunate phrase will precipitate his fall. For the reactionary deputies, seized by virtuous indignation, go about everywhere proclaiming "that a Bolshevik general has installed himself in the Chancellery."

That same evening, Schleicher goes to the Presidency to play his last card. He asks Hindenburg to dissolve Parliament.

"There is no longer any means of governing Germany," he declares. "All the parties have failed since the establishment of the regime: the Socialists with Scheidemann and Müller; the Center with Marx and Brüning; the Right with Papen. There is only one solution left: military dictatorship."

But Hindenburg refuses to enter upon this path. In his opinion, a military dictatorship would be equivalent to a new Kapp putsch. Whoever resorted to it would be broken

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by the general strike. Besides, Schleicher is mistaken if he believes that the army would follow him in this adventure. Yesterday, it disavowed Groener when he issued measures that risked putting it in conflict with the brown army. It would disavow Schleicher tomorrow if he committed the same error and wanted to involve it by force in the country's domestic politics.

For three more days, unable to accept his disgrace, Schleicher persists in trying to keep power. Rejected by the Left as by the Right, deprived of the President's support, unable either to dominate or to dissolve the Reichstag, he struggles in an inextricable situation. Finally, on 28 January, he brings his resignation to Hindenburg.

On the 29th, Göring comes to announce to Hitler that the way is finally clear, and that nothing more prevents him from becoming Chancellor. The last difficulties have been settled in the Reichstag, but the news must still be kept secret for twenty-four hours, for mysterious rumors are circulating in the corridors of Parliament. Is it not being claimed that Schleicher has withdrawn to the outskirts of Berlin and is planning to carry out a coup de force with the Potsdam garrison? Is it not being asserted that von Papen and the leaders of the National-Socialist Party are to be arrested during the night of the 29th to the 30th?

However, the night passes without incident. On 30 January at the first hour, Schleicher sends, in extremis, his friend General von Hammerstein to the Presidency to beg Hindenburg not to entrust power to Hitler. Rather curtly dismissed, the head of the Heeresleitung returns to the Bendlerstrasse and informs Schleicher of the failure of his mission. There is nothing left but to let history follow its course.

An hour later, that is to say at 11 o'clock in the morning, the doors of the Presidency open before the Führer and the members of the new Cabinet. Marshal Hindenburg receives them

[Retained footnotes]

1. The Reichswehr already knows that it can no longer stop events by military action, if one believes Major Foertsch's brochure, *Die Wehrmacht im National-Sozialistischen Staat*.
2. Count Werner von Alvensleben, who spread these rumors, declared on 3 February, in a clarification, that it was "a fable intended to force the hand of the hesitant." So much zeal seems open to caution.
3. General von Hammerstein is a declared opponent of National-Socialism. Some time earlier, he expressed himself in very violent terms against Hitler before deputy Kube, head of the Nazi parliamentary fraction in the Prussian Landtag.

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in his office and appoints Adolf Hitler Chancellor of the Reich. Apart from him, the new government includes only two National-Socialists: Hermann Göring, who becomes Minister of State without portfolio, Reich Commissioner for Aviation and Minister of the Interior of Prussia, and Dr. Frick, head of the National-Socialist fraction in the Reichstag, who is appointed Minister of the Interior of the Reich.

The rest of the ministry is composed as follows:

M. von Papen: Vice-Chancellor and Reich Commissioner for Prussia.

Baron von Neurath: Foreign Affairs.

Franz Seldte, leader of the Stahlhelm: Labor.

Hugenberg, leader of the German-National Party: Food and Agriculture.

Dr. Gürtner: Justice.

Count Schwerin von Krosigk: Finances.

Finally, Lieutenant-General von Blomberg, commander of Wehrkreis I at Königsberg and delegate at Geneva as expert at the Disarmament Conference, is named Minister of the Reichswehr.

In the course of his negotiations with Hindenburg, von Papen succeeded in removing the Marshal's last reservations by promising him that the two most delicate ministries — Foreign Affairs and the Reichswehr — would not be entrusted to National-Socialists. Papen kept his word. But by placing General von Blomberg in the palace of the Bendlerstrasse, Hitler knows that he is putting there a man who feels a marked sympathy for National-Socialism and who, while defending the independence of the Reichswehr, will know how to maintain it in benevolent neutrality toward the Party. For the moment, at least, he asks no more of it...

[Retained footnotes]

1. "This legitimacy conferred on our seizure of power," Hitler would later say, "spared me from having first to strike down the forces of opposition, which would have been a necessity in order to undertake constructive work. It also removed the continual difficulties which would have had to be faced in relations with the Reichswehr. What chiefly determined me to attain power by legal paths was the army's possible reaction. If I had resorted to illegal means, it was the door opened to putschs... and therefore to a permanent state of insecurity. Moreover, in the hypothesis of legality, I kept the army within the framework of a clearly delimited activity and of an exclusively military order. I counted on the people, thanks to the institution of compulsory service, to make the National-Socialist spirit penetrate into it." (Libres Propos, II, p. 133.)

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But what illusions, equivocations, and ulterior motives are hidden behind the handshakes exchanged that day! Hindenburg believes he has at last constituted a cabinet of national union, whereas he has just

opened the doors to dictatorship. Papen imagines that he has caught Hitler in a noose and thinks that in a short time he will have him at his mercy. He does not perceive that the situation is exactly the reverse and that he could take for himself the famous formula: "I have taken a prisoner, but he is holding me!" As for Hitler, he knows that he has just played the biggest poker game of his career. But this game, in the final analysis, is the one that he has won, since he has reached his goal despite all the obstacles piled up on his road...

The people feel this well. And even if they did not feel it, all the Party propaganda would be there to let them know it. For when Göring appears on the balcony and announces to the crowd that the Führer has just been named Chancellor, endless acclamations resound in the Wilhelmstrasse. While telegraphs and telephones communicate the ministerial list to the newspapers of the whole world, the news echoes through the city. A few moments later, all the houses are flagged, and more and more militants run in from every corner of the capital. An ever denser crowd flows toward the Tiergarten and the ministerial quarter. From Unter den Linden to Leipzigerplatz, the streets are black with people. Little by little, enthusiasm reaches delirium. An unchained multitude invades Wilhelmsplatz and surges against the façade of the Chancellery. Members of the Stahlhelm and brown shirts, reconciled in victory, fraternize in the streets with the police agents. Throughout the whole center of the city, it is a deafening tumult, alternately dominated by Deutschland über alles and the Horst Wessel Lied.

But in the evening the spectacle takes on the character of an apotheosis: carrying burning torches and marching in close ranks behind thousands of standards, a procession of 25,000 men belonging to the S.A., the S.S., and the Steel Helmets marches from 7 p.m. to 1 a.m.

[Retained footnotes]

1. Speaking ten days later at the Berlin Sports Palace, Hitler would declare: "I reflected a great deal before resolving to form the ministry of 30 January. Powerful reasons were needed to bring me to do it. In all my life, no decision has been as painful for me to take as that one."

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under the Brandenburg Gate. Coming from the Charlottenburg road, the long serpent of fire ascends Unter den Linden, bends into the Wilhelmstrasse, and passes before Hindenburg and Hitler, toward whom frenzied ovations rise. "At the same hour," writes Gerhard Rühle, "similar scenes unfold in all regions of Germany. Millions of men traverse the streets of the towns carrying torches. Millions of Germans line the country roads and salute, arm extended, the advent of the Third Reich."

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THE BREAKTHROUGH (31 January–23 March 1933)

Once the last torches are extinguished and the pennants put away, it is necessary to get to work. Holding firmly in hand the Interior ministries in the Reich and in Prussia, certain of the benevolent neutrality of the Reichswehr, Hitler will now strive to widen the breach that he has made in the governmental device, so as to allow the whole brown army and the Party to rush into it.

On 31 January, the new Cabinet presents itself before the Reichstag. Dr. Frick reads the ministerial declaration to the deputies and asks the Parties to grant the government a one-year truce.

As was to be expected, Communists and Socialists respond by filing motions of no confidence. As for the head of the Catholic Center, Monsignor Kaas, he discusses the Chancellor's declaration point by point and claims to impose another governmental program on him. Hitler will use this clumsy obstruction to convince the parties of the Right that a new popular consultation has become indispensable. Armed with their support, he goes that very evening to Hindenburg and asks him to dissolve the Reichstag.

The Marshal is not a little surprised by this request.

"I had nevertheless been assured," he replies in a harsh tone, "that the new combination would give the government a sufficient foundation to avoid a new dissolution of Parliament! It was provided with this promise that I entrusted power to you. Have I been deceived?"

Very skillfully, Hitler argues to him that it is necessary to be finished once and for all with the opposition of the Socialists and

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the Center. Since Hindenburg has a marked aversion for these two Parties, and since Hitler's request has been countersigned by von Papen and Hugenberg, he finally resigns himself and promulgates, on 1 February, the following decree:

Because the creation of a stable parliamentary majority proves impossible, I dissolve the Reichstag by virtue of paragraph 25 of the Constitution, in order to permit the people to take a position toward the new government of national concentration by the election of a new Parliament.

The date of the new elections is fixed for 5 March.

Simultaneously, a new Cabinet has been constituted in Prussia. Vice-Chancellor von Papen has again become Reich Commissioner in place of Schleicher, and Göring Minister of the Interior in place of Dr. Bracht. M. Rust has been named Minister of Cults and Hugenberg Minister of Economy, Labor, and Agriculture.

Just as in the Reichstag, the deputies in the Prussian Landtag obstruct the new government. The red-and-black coalition composed of Communists, Socialists, and the Center wants at all costs to prevent the ministry from getting its hands on the Prussian police, which alone represents two-thirds of all the police of the Reich.

On 6 February, President Hindenburg promulgates a second decree, For the restoration of normal conditions of government in Prussia:

1. I transfer until further order to the Reich Commissioner in Prussia all the powers of the Prussian government, as defined by the judgment of the Supreme Court of Leipzig.

2. I charge the Reich Commissioner with the execution of this measure.

3. This decree enters into force immediately.

This ordinance has the effect of eliminating without appeal the Socialist Braun-Severing government — partly put back in the saddle by the Court of Justice — and of breaking the dualism which opposed the Reich to Prussia. On 7 February, the Landtag is dissolved, and the new elections are also fixed for 5 March.

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By becoming Minister of the Interior in Prussia, Göring has taken possession of one of the most powerful ministries in Germany. His first concern, upon entering office, is to purge the cadres of the administration and of the police.

Twenty-two colonels (out of thirty-two), hundreds of officers, and thousands of noncommissioned officers are dismissed overnight and replaced by elements borrowed from the S.A. and S.S. Then Göring presents pennants to the different police formations, swears them in, and creates a new Guard, composed of elite agents.

Parallel to this recasting of the regular formations, the new Minister of the Interior creates auxiliary police corps composed exclusively of S.A., S.S., and members of the Stahlhelm. These formations are armed and wear a white armband bearing the inscription *Hilfspolizei*.

Finally, all the senior personnel of the police is replaced. Rear-Admiral von Levetzow becomes Police President in Berlin; Colonel Roosen, in Halle; Victor Lutze, commander of the S.A. division of Hanover, in Hanover; Wilhelm Schepmann, commander of the S.A. division of Westphalia, in Dortmund; General von Westrum, in Frankfurt, etc.

"A party that struggles with fanatical ardor for the establishment of a new order has the right to use all weapons, even the most brutal," Hitler has said, and Göring will demonstrate to Prussia that this is not an empty word. On 17 February, he promulgates a decree ordering the police to assist without reservation the national formations (S.A., S.S., and Stahlhelm) and to make use of its weapons without hesitation. This ordinance raises a storm of protests, and it must be acknowledged that the instructions given to the agents are of draconian severity. But another

[Retained footnotes]

2. The appointments of Lutze and Schepmann have as their purpose the close coordination of the leadership of the S.A. and that of the police.

3. A four-line notice, published on the second page of the *Völkischer Beobachter* of 17 February 1933, announces that "M. von Versen has been designated to replace the Oberpräsident of the province of Hanover, Gustav Noske." Sic transit...

4. "The assaults and acts of terrorism committed by the Communists must be repressed with the utmost energy," the decree declares, "and the police must not hesitate to shoot if necessary. The agents who make use of their weapons will be covered by us, whatever the consequences of their acts. Conversely, whoever falters in his task, through excessive precautions, must expect disciplinary sanctions. Every agent must penetrate himself with this idea: that inaction is a more serious fault than an error committed in the execution of the orders received."

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storm is approaching, far more serious than that one. While the National-Socialists were mounting the assault on power, the red formations were actively preparing an armed insurrection. A sort of subterranean rumbling that swells and spreads seems to announce the coming of a dreadful detonation: a few more days and it will be the shock of two revolutions...

What is astonishing is not that this shock occurs, but that it did not occur earlier; for by allowing their adversaries to come to power, the Communists gave them a head start that they would no longer catch up.

It is not, however, for want of having laid out their plans minutely. From the beginning of December 1932, the Union of Fighters of the Red Front organized at Brunswick a secret general conference, during which the leaders of the Insurrection Committee worked out a quarterly program of action (that is to say, going to the end of February 1933).

"We are on the eve of a great offensive," one reads in the final report of the conference. "We must create within the working class an atmosphere such that it understands that the place of the rifle is in the hand of the worker."

Following this general conference, a whole series of regional conferences took place. That of Hesse-Frankfurt was held from 17 to 18 December; that of Württemberg a few days later. At the close of the latter, a resolution was voted declaring that:

"...the red soldiers of freedom take their places in ranks for the realization of the quarterly action plan. They will not stop until the red flag, symbol of the liberation of the peoples, flies over Soviet, socialist, free Germany."

On 24 January 1933, the forces present confront one another for the first time. That day, twenty thousand S.A. gather on Bülowplatz and march past the Karl Liebknecht House,

[Retained footnotes]

whoever falters in his task, through excessive precautions, must expect disciplinary sanctions. Every agent must penetrate himself with this idea: that inaction is a more serious fault than an error committed in the execution of the orders received.

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headquarters of the Communist Party. Furious to see themselves defied in what they consider their stronghold, the red formations try to break up the procession. They are driven back with truncheon blows into the side streets, while the brown shirts celebrate their victory by intoning the Horst Wessel Lied.

The next day, the Communist Party takes up the challenge. Fifteen thousand members of the Anti-Fascist Combat League gather before the Karl Liebknecht House to the strains of the Internationale.

The two adversaries observe one another, without yet coming to blows. But while avoiding engaging the battle, they intensify, on both sides, their preparations for combat. On the evening of 30 January, while the crowd acclaimed Hitler on the balcony of the Chancellery and the S.A. paraded by torchlight under the Brandenburg Gate, the Anti-Fascist Combat League addressed to all its members the following Alert Order:

The new government was constituted today at noon. The present circumstances impose on us extreme vigilance. Consequently, we order the following:

1. All levels of the Combat Federation and the self-protection formations of the red masses must be placed, until further order, in a state of alert;
2. All organizational material still needed must be placed in safety. The comrades must hide their membership cards;
3. In case the organization is banned, it will continue to exist clandestinely;
4. Contact must urgently be established with the teams and divisions of the Reich Banner, which is also alerted, to tell them where they can find us and that we are ready to march with them against the fascists.

This circular is to be destroyed immediately after being read and after its modes of execution have been discussed with the competent Regional Leadership.

All ready for the assault!

The Federal Directorate of the District.

On 2 February, Göring bans all Communist meetings and demonstrations. Searches carried out a few days later at the Karl Liebknecht House reveal the existence of secret rooms which the police had

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never discovered in the time when Prussia was governed by the Socialists. A large number of documents are seized there, proving that the revolt is to begin in the demilitarized zone of the Rhineland. The signal for the insurrection will be given by the assassination of the Führer, who is to go into this region during his next electoral tour.

Immediately afterward, the terrorist groups will seize the T.S.F. broadcasting stations, from which the call to arms will be launched to the proletariat. At the same moment, the large enterprises will be paralyzed by strikes; bridges, barracks, and police posts occupied. The Revolutionary Committee will establish its quarters at Düren and Krefeld.

While the red formations make themselves masters of the Ruhr, a second insurrection will break out in Upper Silesia. Then a third in Hamburg. Finally, the different insurrectionary movements will converge toward Berlin, where they will proclaim the advent of the German Soviet Republic.

No doubt the broad outlines of this plan are subject to modification, according to the more or less favorable way in which events evolve. But the searches made throughout the Reich between 14 and 20 February indicate that the orders of the Central Committee have already reached the provinces by the 13th. At Aue in Saxony; at Flensburg in Schleswig; at Cammin in Pomerania; at Herdecke, Schwerte, Hagen, Recklinghausen, and Bochum in Westphalia; at Schönberg, Liebau, and Landeshut in Silesia; at Mössingen in Württemberg, and at Schneidemühl in West Prussia, the police lay hands on arms and munitions depots which serve as secret warehouses for the red combat groups. At Hanover, the security police discover

[Retained footnotes]

3,500 explosive capsules and a considerable quantity of dynamite and fuses. At Altona, a denunciation permits the seizure of 70 machine guns, 400 rifles, more than 2,000 revolvers.

1. The German government did not publish the seized documents, so as not to frighten opinion by revealing to it the scale of the Marxist preparations. This was a mistake: for afterward, certain left-wing circles were able to claim that the threat of insurrection had been invented out of whole cloth to justify the repression that followed. Those who reason thus pay little homage to the courage of the German Communists, in supposing that in a country that counted more than 6 million unemployed, with nearly 5 million voters and 89 seats in Parliament, the German C.P. would have allowed itself to be crushed without even attempting to defend itself. The author had the opportunity, in 1936, to see the enormous quantities of weapons taken from the Communists in 1933, piled up in the cellars of the Police Presidency in Berlin.

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and a great number of bottles filled with incendiary liquids.

On 25 February, the Self-Protection Groups are directly attached to the leadership of the League of Red Front Fighters. This fusion gives the Communist Party a combat structure, provided with a single leadership, at once political and military. On the 26th, the central leadership of the League of Red Front Fighters addresses to all its sections the Supreme Alert Order:

To all Divisional Staffs!

Our organization, and with it the whole valiant working class, now finds itself placed before its decisive task. Courage, audacity, and decision! It is a matter not only of raising a broad mass rampart for the defense of the German Communist Party and the rights of the working class, but also of

unleashing a powerful mass assault against the fascist dictatorship. In this decisive moment, the Central Leadership counts on every leader and every comrade to give the maximum of his strength and even to sacrifice his life in the struggle for the triumph of the working class. For these reasons, we order the following:

1. The whole organization is in a permanent state of alert.
2. All discussion, all meeting are forbidden. Only the orders of the Central Leadership, transmitted by the leaders, count. Whoever does not obey them blindly is a traitor.
3. Organize the defense of the workers' districts. Establish a patrol and guard service. See to it that replacements for the leaders exist everywhere. Make a report on everything that you observe by the quickest route.

Leaders and comrades! Unfurl the banner of our mass action! Forward, to the most advanced combat posts! Show that you are fighters and that, if the revolution requires it, you will also know how to die as heroes!

Indissolubly united with all leaders and comrades by this solemn oath: forward! Long live our victory!

The Central Leadership.

Toward the end of February, the electoral campaign is in full swing. The speeches become more aggressive, more rumbling the clamor that rises from the crowds packed into the meeting halls.

On the evening of 27 February — it is a Monday — Hitler is resting,

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between two speeches, by dining with Goebbels and his family in his apartment on Reichskanzlerplatz. He listens to music and relaxes by talking freely with the chief of Propaganda. Suddenly, around 10 p.m., this atmosphere of intimacy is disturbed by the ringing of the telephone.

"The Reichstag is burning!" announces Dr. Hanfstaengl, at the height of excitement.

Hitler and Goebbels leap into a car, race at full speed along the Charlottenburg road, and arrive a few moments later at the scene of the fire.

The spectacle is frightening. The great glass dome has collapsed, and through that gaping space a whirl of flames rises toward the sky. The session hall is nothing but a furnace. Alerted by a passerby, the police have arrested the incendiary. He is a young Dutch Communist by the name of Van der Lubbe, an unfortunate human wreck, stupefied and half-irresponsible.

Goebbels immediately sees the advantage that can be drawn from this sensational event. Immediately setting in motion all the machinery of propaganda, he thunders, fulminates, and stigmatizes "the beacon of the red insurrection." He busies himself so much and so well that people begin to ask themselves almost everywhere whether the instigators of this crime are not those very same people who draw such

great profit from it. The number of empty cans that had contained the fifty kilos of inflammable material found on the premises is multiplied tenfold. Is that not proof that Van der Lubbe did not act alone? Ernst Torgler, the head of the Communist parliamentary group, was the last to leave the Reichstag before the fire. He is immediately imprisoned. But there must also be foreign accomplices. From thread to thread, one goes back to Dimitrov, the secretary-general of the Comintern, who by a curious coincidence happens to be in Berlin that evening, and to the Bulgarian Communists Popov and Tanev.

The trial brought against them ends in a fiasco. Dimitrov, who plays the principal role in it, enrages Göring by his insolence and his sharp dialectic. Torgler is cleared. In the end, there remains only the unfortunate

[Retained footnotes]

1. "Torgler was freed," Hitler would later say. "I am convinced that he had the Reichstag burned..."

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Van der Lubbe, who cries, drools, and replies only in monosyllables. He will be interned for a few days for mental debility and finally executed.

The failure of this trial brings a torrent of water to the Communists' mill. With as much agility as Goebbels, they answer his accusations by organizing symbolic "counter-trials" in London and Paris. They too have not the shadow of a proof. But they shout as loudly as the chief of German propaganda and nail him to the pillory, at the same time as Göring and Hitler. Is fecit cui prodest. They are the instigators of a fire that occurred just in time to serve their designs!

"And yet," writes Dr. Peter Kleist, "even today, the backgrounds of the Reichstag fire remain unexplained. Gisevius, the Gestapo assessor, who claims to have been everywhere, tells his little story; Ernst Kruse, who claims to have been a former servant of Röhm, tells another; Rauschning asserts that he heard Göring himself boast of being the author of this crime. But even at the Nuremberg trial, the Allied prosecutors will not succeed in imputing responsibility for it to the Nazis."

Nevertheless, Hitler uses it as a war machine. At his request, Marshal Hindenburg promulgates, from the next morning (28 February), an ordinance For the Protection of the People and the State:

§ 1. Articles 114, 115, 117, 118, 123, 124, and 153 of the Constitution are suspended until further order. Consequently individual liberties, such as freedom of opinion, press, and association, undergo certain restrictions. The secrecy of postal, telegraphic, and telephone correspondence is lifted. Searches and seizures are authorized.

§ 2. If a Land does not take the necessary measures for the restoration of public security and order, the government of the Reich is authorized temporarily to assume the powers of the supreme authorities in the said Land.

[Retained footnotes]

1. Dr. Peter Kleist, Auch Du warst dabei, Göttingen, 1959, pp. 56–57. Only a former S.A. man by the name of Heinz Jürgens, who fled to Brazil to escape death, would later claim that it was Goebbels who introduced Van der Lubbe into the Reichstag building. But this testimony cannot seriously be accepted, given the conditions under which it was collected. See also Fritz Tobias, Der Reichstagsbrand, Legende und Wirklichkeit, Rastatt, 1962.

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§ 3. Acts of treason, poisonings, arsons, explosions, floods, and sabotage of railway lines will be punished by death.

§ 4. The following will be punished by death, or by fifteen years in prison if a more severe penalty is not already decreed by the Code:

- a) Whoever undertakes to kill the President of the Reich, a Reich Commissioner, a member of the Imperial government or of the governments of the Länder; whoever incites third parties to commit a murder of this kind, or agrees to participate in it, or speaks of it with third parties;
- b) Whoever commits acts of violence or is caught armed in a riot or a brawl;
- c) Whoever seizes a third person by force with the intention of using him as a hostage in the course of the political struggle.

Von Hindenburg, Hitler, Frick, Gürtner.

Twenty-four hours later (1 March), this ordinance is reinforced by a second decree For the Repression of Communist Acts of Violence:

§ 1. Whoever prints a text inciting to armed struggle against the authority of the State or provoking workers to unleash strikes in establishments of vital interest, whether a partial movement, a mass movement, or a general strike, will be punished by one month to three years in prison, as having committed an act of high treason.

Then repression falls upon Communist circles; S.S., State Police, and auxiliary formations enter into action simultaneously. Day and night, the streets are crossed by armed groups. They carry out mass searches in the workers' districts. Four thousand Marxist leaders — among them Thälmann and all the members of the Central Committee — and six thousand functionaries belonging to extreme-left circles are imprisoned. All Marxist newspapers are banned, and their buildings occupied by the brown shirts. A crowd of militants and, at the same time, non-Communist Jews, is penned in concentration camps.

Following this roundup, the Red Front is dislocated, the combat formations disarmed, the terrorists shot or put out of action. Terrified by the rapidity of the action

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and too weak to resist the wave that submerges them, the workers' unions give up proclaiming the general strike.

While Göring crushes the last centers of Marxist agitation in Prussia, Goebbels intensifies electoral propaganda throughout the Reich. But now that Hitler is in the Chancellery, he has means far more powerful than all those he had been able to put into operation until now. The newsreels, radio, and the state press increase tenfold the resonance of his proclamations. Thus it is a giant electoral battle that unfolds, such as Germany has never yet seen. Once again, Hitler flies over Germany by airplane, speaking in turn at Stuttgart, Dortmund, Cologne, Frankfurt, Munich, Nuremberg, Breslau, Berlin, and Hamburg. His tour ends on 4 March, at Königsberg, with a monster demonstration from which his speech is broadcast by all the Reich stations.

The next day, the elections mark a resounding success for the N.S.D.A.P.: it receives 17,300,000 votes and 288 seats in the Reichstag. Papen and Hugenberg, who for their part have constituted a "black-white-red combat bloc," are cruelly beaten: they have only 3,100,000 votes and 52 seats. However, the Communists still win 4,750,000 votes, which in principle would represent 81 seats. But their party having been declared illegal, no seat will be assigned to them in the new Parliament. As a result, the percentage of the National-Socialists reaches 52%, which confers on them an absolute majority. It permits them to govern without the support of the other parties. The same proportion is found in the Prussian Landtag, where the N.S.D.A.P. obtains 211 seats out of 392. Consolidated by the double victory he has just won in the Reich and in Prussia, Hitler can now extend his

[Retained footnotes]

1. That day Hindenburg, departing from the reserve he had observed until then, admits to Hitler "that at bottom, the parliamentary game has always been antipathetic and alien to him, and that he is delighted to see him put an end to this fair." (Libres Propos, II, p. 137.)

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[Graphic page retained from original: line chart titled "Number of seats won in Reichstag elections by the principal German political parties (20 May 1928 - 5 March 1933)." The chart compares S.P.D., K.P.D., N.S.D.A.P., D.N.V.P., and Centre seats across 1928, 1929, 1930, 1931, 1932, and 1933. The N.S.D.A.P. rises from 12 seats in 1928 to 107 in September 1930, 230 in July 1932, 196 in November 1932, and 288 on 5 March 1933.]

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power to the governments of the states of Southern Germany.

These, increasingly worried, protested on 1 March against the presidential ordinance of 28 February, which authorizes the Chancellor to take action not only against the excesses of political parties, but also against any insubordination on the part of the governments of the Länder. M. Schäffer, head of the Bavarian People's Party, even went so far as to declare that if Hitler tried to send an Imperial Commissioner into Bavaria, the latter would be apprehended as soon as he reached the frontier. "Since the Reich no longer respects the federal principles inscribed in the Constitution," he added, "Bavaria intends to take back her liberty and give herself the form of government she desires."

On 6 March, M. Held, president of the Bavarian Council, visibly impressed by the result of the elections, shows himself more accommodating. He admits the necessity of reshaping his cabinet and promises to leave "shortly" the place to the head of the National-Socialist fraction of the Landtag. But at the same time, M. Stützel, Minister of the Interior, has munitions distributed to the police, signs a decree authorizing the agents to shoot without warning, and gives them the order to occupy the public buildings. "The danger of a new monarchist and particularist putsch seemed imminent," writes Gerhard Rühle.

But, as in Prussia, Hitler is determined to intervene before the crisis breaks out. On 8 March, the Minister of the Interior of the Reich takes the direction of the police in Württemberg, Baden, Saxony, Schaumburg-Lippe, and in a certain number of small states. Finally, on 9 March in the evening, Dr. Frick names General von Epp Reich Commissioner for Bavaria.

It is the third time since the war that he enters the Bavarian capital. The first time, returning from the front in 1918, he had been received with stones by the Soldiers' Councils, struck and degraded by the Spartacist militiamen. The following year, he entered Munich at the head of his Freikorps, with the divisions sent by Noske, to break the dictatorship of the Republic of Councils.

[Retained footnotes]

2. The day before, the National-Socialist Party had received 1,900,000 votes in Bavaria, against 1,200,000 for the Bavarian People's Party, until then all-powerful.

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This time, he is invested with full powers, and the crowd receives him as a triumphator.

As soon as he arrives, von Epp sets to work. At 10:30 p.m., he has the Ministry of Foreign Affairs occupied by the S.A. and the S.S. Despite the orders given by the Bavarian government, the police do not react. Half an hour later, all public buildings are in the hands of the brown shirts. The monarchist opposition collapses lamentably. At 2 o'clock in the morning, von Epp forms a new ministry. Captain Röhm is appointed Deputy Commissioner, without special powers. Himmler, commander-in-chief of the S.S., becomes Police President of Munich. Nothing remains for M. Held but to tender his resignation.

The next day, 10 March, National-Socialist governments are formed in Saxony, Baden, and Württemberg. Everywhere the old cadres burst under the pressure of the new forces. On the 14th, it is Hesse's turn. Eight days after von Epp's arrival in Munich, National-Socialism has triumphed throughout Southern Germany.

At last 21 March arrives, the date fixed for the opening of the new Reichstag. This inauguration is preceded by a solemn ceremony that unfolds at Potsdam, in the garrison chapel.

Everything is symbolic in this ceremony, at which, amid a great deployment of forces, the former Crown Prince, Marshal Hindenburg, and Adolf Hitler are present.

Symbolic, the choice of the date, for it was on 21 March 1871 that Bismarck inaugurated the first parliament of the Second Reich. Symbolic, the choice of the place, for if it was at Versailles that the Iron Chancellor founded the Empire, and at Weimar that the National Assembly proclaimed the Republic, it is at Potsdam, on the tomb of Frederick II, that Hitler and Hindenburg come to meditate before inaugurating the first parliament of the Third Reich. Symbolic, these two walls

[Retained footnotes]

1. As in Berlin, the divisions of the Reichswehr keep rigorously apart from the conflict.
2. If the Movement was able to spread so quickly, let us not forget that it is because the National-Socialist cells distributed throughout the whole territory of the Reich constituted the common denominator of the different Länder. The Third Reich had grown, without anyone noticing it, inside the Republic.

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of men who line up face to face in the courtyard of honor of the castle: on one side, the Reichswehr in field-gray, sworn to the Marshal; on the other, the militiamen in brown shirts, sworn to the Chancellor. Symbolic, finally, the handshake exchanged between Hindenburg and Hitler, while a helmeted officer, frozen in the second plane in a hieratic position of attention, seems to say by his presence: "It is I who have served as bridge between the past and the future, between the Wilhelmine Empire and the reborn Reich!"

In the afternoon, at the Kroll Opera in Berlin, decorated for the occasion with oak garlands and flags, Göring opens the first session of the new legislature. The next day, 22 March, Hitler lays on the desk of the Reichstag a draft law For the Alleviation of the Distress of the People and the Reich, by which he asks Parliament to grant him full powers for a duration of four years, "in order to save the German peasantry from ruin and to integrate the unemployed into the circuit of production":

"The number of seats at the government's disposal," he declares, "could dispense it from asking you for your approval. Nevertheless, it expressly wishes you to give it to it by a clear and unequivocal vote. The government offers the parties of the Reichstag the possibility of peaceful collaboration. But it is equally prepared to face their refusal, and the hostilities that will result from it. It is for you, gentlemen deputies, to decide between peace and war."

This time the Center bows. On 24 March, despite the opposition of the Social-Democrats, the new law is voted by 441 votes against 94.

As soon as the result of the vote is proclaimed, Hitler turns toward the Socialist deputies and says to them:

"Now, you may go. I have no further need of you!"

The former combatant of the 16th Bavarian Infantry Regiment has kept his oath of 11 November 1918.

The Republic is dead. Hitler is dictator.

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SECOND PART

THE CONSTRUCTION OF THE THIRD REICH (1934–1936)

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VI

THE UNIFICATION OF THE REICH (24 March 1933–30 January 1934)

At the moment when Hitler accedes to dictatorship, the Weimar Republic has failed on almost every plane. No doubt Stresemann at Locarno and von Papen at Lausanne obtained appreciable advantages from the Allies, such as the early evacuation of the Rhineland and the liquidation of Reparations. But from the economic and social point of view it is absolute chaos. The twenty-three cabinets that have governed Germany since the collapse of the Empire bequeath to their successors a deficit of nearly 7 billion gold marks. The foreign debt rises to 17 billion, and there are no more than 439 million in the coffers of the Reichsbank. The peasants are crushed under the weight of their debts. More than 6 million unemployed are looking for work; tens of thousands of families are without bread and without shelter. For the period from June 1919 to January 1933, official statistics record 224,900 non-political suicides, caused exclusively by misery or despair.

For more than two years, the Chancellors have maintained themselves only by resorting to the exceptional powers that the President delegates to them by virtue of paragraph 48. The Reich is broken up into 22 states, constantly set against the central authority, each having its local Assembly jealously attached to its prerogatives. And at the very top of this shaky edifice, there remains only a Chancellor always

[Retained footnotes]

1. "In 1933," Hitler would later say, "the Reich had 83 million marks..."

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in conflict with Parliament, and a President frequently in disagreement with his Chancellor.

Hardly installed in the Wilhelmstrasse, Hitler sets himself to the most urgent task: the recasting of all German institutions. He could convene, as in 1919, a Constituent Assembly, or impose a new Constitution himself. But he has no confidence in the validity of these methods. "From the day after his accession to power," writes State Secretary Stuckart, "the Führer consciously renounced giving the Third Reich a written Constitution. He preferred to let the German unitary, authoritarian, and popular State develop by a growth adapted to the general situation and to the requirements of the moment." In this sense one may say that the Third Reich possesses, from now on, a new structure. But this structure does not find its expression in a constitutional Charter; it expresses itself through an ensemble of organic laws.

This genesis of a new State, which one witnesses during the months that follow the seizure of power, is always accomplished in the direction of unification; and this unification is pursued at the same time on five planes: 1) the concentration of powers in the hands of the Führer; 2) the regrouping of the different national formations; 3) the abolition of political Parties and the promotion of the N.S.D.A.P. to the rank of sole Party; 4) the administrative fusion of the Länder and the Reich; 5) the fusion of the people and the national army.

At the end of this process, everything will be absorbed into a single, total, and absolute power. Striking illustration of Gobineau's precept: "When the State is everything, sooner or later it must have everything, and what is withheld from it is stolen from it."

*

Let us first examine the concentration of powers.

It is by virtue of paragraph 48 that Hitler governed from 30 January to 22 March 1933, since it was by invoking this article that President Hindenburg promulgated his ordinances of 28 February and 1 March, which practically put

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2. Gobineau, *Histoire des Perses*.

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an end to the activity of the Communists. But Hitler does not want to continue governing by exceptional means. Nor does he want to be obliged at every moment to solicit Parliament's approval. Thus he has the Reichstag itself grant him the legal right to draft and promulgate laws, even when they bring a modification to the Constitution.

The Law for the Alleviation of the Distress of the People and the Reich, or Law of Full Powers, voted by the Reichstag the day after the ceremony at Potsdam by 441 votes against 94, practically reunites in the Chancellor's hands alone the legislative power and the executive power, whose separation is one of the fundamental principles of the democratic system. "The legislative and the executive," writes Dr. Stuckart, "are no more than one in the National-Socialist regime. Laws no longer represent a

weakening for the one who governs, as is necessarily the case when their elaboration is devolved upon another organ than the government. The law, henceforth, is an instrument of power. The Führer alone bears the responsibility for its handling, and the members of the Cabinet serve him as advisers."

It has been said that paragraph 48, which granted full powers for a time to the President of the Reich, had ended by devouring the Constitution, but this formula is exact only

[Retained footnotes]

1. Law for the Alleviation of the Distress of the People and the Reich, or Ermächtigungsgesetz:

§ 1. Laws may be promulgated by the government of the Reich outside the procedures provided by the Constitution of the Empire.

§ 2. Laws promulgated by the government of the Reich may depart from the Constitution, on condition that they do not have as their object a modification of the Reichstag or the Reichsrat. The powers of the President of the Reich are not modified.

§ 3. Laws promulgated by the government of the Reich will be ratified by the Chancellor and published in the official journal. They enter into force the day after their publication.

§ 4. Treaties concluded with foreign states do not need to be ratified by the legislative bodies. The government will itself publish the regulations necessary for their execution.

§ 5. This law, valid until 1 April 1937, will enter into force on the day of its promulgation. It will be abrogated if another government succeeds the present government.

Berlin, 24 March 1933. Von Hindenburg, Hitler, Frick, Von Neurath, Krosigk.

3. Planned for a duration of four years, this law will be renewed unanimously by the Reichstag for a second period of the same length on 1 April 1937.

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up to a certain point. Paragraph 48 was, properly speaking, an instrument of "temporary dictatorship" to which the central power could have recourse in order to impose its will on a recalcitrant Land. Now, Hitler does not consider himself a "dictator" in the Roman sense of the term. His role consists in translating into acts the will of the people; he is a mediator between the historical destinies of the nation and the unformulated and often unconscious needs of the mass.

Thus Hitler takes care to complete the Law of Full Powers with the Law on the Plebiscite, promulgated on 14 July 1933. This gives him the right to consult the people directly in order to know whether it approves or does not approve the measures planned or taken by him. If the result of the plebiscite is positive, it has the value of ratification.

Thanks to these two complementary laws, the Reichstag is practically eliminated as an organ of government. Convened on indeterminate dates at the summons of its president, it will form no more

than a sort of registration chamber before which the Chancellor will come to give the reasons for his acts and comment on his policy. Sweeping away with one gesture all the intermediate instances, there remain, face to face, only the Führer and the nation.

The same principle presides over the regrouping of the national formations.

We have seen, in a preceding chapter, four great armed groupings maneuver on the chessboard of the Reich and rival one another for the conquest of power. From

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1. Law on the Plebiscite:

§ 1. 1) The government of the Reich may ask the people whether it approves or does not approve a measure planned or taken by the government. 2) It may also concern a law.

§ 2. The measure submitted to the plebiscite is considered acquired when it has collected a simple majority of votes. This provision applies equally to a law modifying the Constitution.

§ 3. If the people approve the said measure, it is applied in accordance with Article 3 of the Law for the Alleviation of the Distress of the People and the Reich.

§ 4. The Minister of the Interior of the Reich is authorized to take all legal and administrative measures necessary for the execution of the present law.

Berlin, 14 July 1933. HITLER, FRICK.

2. It is by virtue of this law that the plebiscites of 12 December 1933, 19 August 1934, and 29 March 1936 will take place.

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February 1933 onward, the Red Front is crushed. Almost at the same moment, the Reichsbanner is dissolved. Of the four political armies that still existed at the end of 1932, only two remain: the brown army, composed of the S.A. and S.S., and the gray army, composed of the Stahlhelm and the Kyffhäuserbund.

On the evening of 30 January, the members of the Assault Sections and of the Stahlhelm had marched side by side under the Brandenburg Gate. Since then, they had cooperated closely with the Prussian police. On 21 July 1933, by a decree of the Führer, the brown army absorbs the Steel Helmet. The latter then entitles itself First S.A. Reserve, or S.A.R. I, while remaining formed of regiments composed exclusively of former members of the Stahlhelm. Then, at the beginning of 1934, these regiments are dissolved one after another, and their effectives incorporated according to age into the active and reserve S.A. regiments.

As for the Kyffhäuserbund, it becomes the Second S.A. Reserve or S.A.R. II. All these forces, whose number may be estimated at nearly two million men, are then grouped under the command of Captain

Röhm.

However, there still exist in Germany the remnants of a great number of Freikorps, constituted during the months that followed the defeat. They too must not remain outside the movement. But as much as the fusion of the S.A. and the Steel Helmet was carried out discreetly, so much does that of the Freikorps and the Assault Sections take place with pomp, during a ceremony to which Hitler was determined to give the maximum brilliance.

On 9 November 1933, the commemoration of the national uprising of 1923 takes place at Munich. Ten years earlier, Hitler, marching beside Ludendorff and Göring, was exposed with his men to the fusillade at the Feldherrnhalle. At that time, he was only a rebel, an outlaw. Today it is as Chancellor of the Reich that he advances toward the catafalque where the coffins of the sixteen National-Socialist militants, cut down by the bullets of the Bavarian police, are lined up. He lays at the foot of the cenotaph a wreath

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1. Certain elements of the Stahlhelm not incorporated into the S.A. will still survive in the Kernstahlhelm, transformed into the National-Socialist League of Former German Combatants (N.S.D.F.B.). This will dissolve itself on 9 November 1935.

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of oak leaves tied in the colors of the Party and bearing this inscription: "You have conquered, against all odds."

Then delegations of most of the former Freikorps are seen to advance, bearing a forest of standards, some of which are torn by machine-gun fire and faded by bad weather. It is, in a striking abbreviation, the evocation of the whole German postwar period. One by one, the names of the units that were formed in the first days of the revolution, or that took part at Hitler's side in the uprising of 1923, resound for the last time. There are the Freikorps of the Baltic and Silesia, of Saxony and the Ruhr, representatives of the Iron Division and the Ehrhardt Brigade, the Freikorps von Epp, Oberland, and Rossbach, the Hitler Shock Troop, the Munich regiment, etc.

Each time, at the call of the name of his former formation, the standard-bearer of the Freikorps detaches himself from the group and answers: "Present!" Then he hands his emblem to a guard of honor formed of S.A. and S.S. Passing by, one recognizes the pennant planted by the Oberland volunteers on the summit of the Annaberg, Rossbach's black flag embroidered with a silver R, the blue standards with the Maltese cross that floated on the ramparts of Bauske and Thorensberg. At the end of the ceremony, all the flags gathered into multicolored bundles are carried into the hall of the Brown House, where they will remain on display.

While the memory of the Freikorps thus enters history, the Freikorps themselves are officially dissolved.

Parallel to this regrouping of the national formations, Hitler proceeds to the abolition of the different political Parties and to the promotion of the N.S.D.A.P. to the rank of sole Party of the State.

One of the defects of German democracy was the proliferation

[Retained footnotes]

1. The League of Baltic veterans, presided over by Commandant Bischoff (the former commander of the Iron Division), and the League of veterans of the Freikorps will still subsist for some time. They will in turn be dissolved in July 1935.

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of political groupings. Thirty-seven different parties and more than 7,000 candidates had sought the votes of the electors at the renewal of the Reichstag in 1932. All Germans of good faith recognized that it was necessary to put an end to a state of things that made Parliament properly ungovernable.

We have already seen what terrible sanctions fell upon the Communist Party after the Reichstag fire. These are further reinforced, on 26 May, by a decree confiscating all the Party's property — funds, buildings, newspapers, etc. — as having served to "maintain a foreign army on German territory and to foment plots against the security of the State." Following this measure, the Communist Party is practically eliminated.

On 22 June, Hitler bans the Socialist Party. "Recent events," one reads in the preamble of the dissolution decree, "have proved in an irrefutable manner that the Socialist Party has not hesitated to participate in acts of high treason against Germany and her government..." (there follows the enumeration of the grievances formulated against the Social-Democrats). "All these facts oblige the government to consider the Socialist Party as a grouping dangerous and hostile to the State, which can claim no treatment other than that applied to the Communist Party."

Having thus broken the backbone of the opposition of the Left, Hitler then turns toward the opposition of the Right. On 27 June, the German-National Party dissolves in its turn. The ambitious Hugenberg resigns his functions. Against his will, no doubt. But what else can he do? The Stahlhelm had been incorporated into the S.A. eight days earlier (21 June), so that he no longer has any force on which to rely.

On 4 July, it is the turn of the People's Party (D.V.P.) and the Bavarian People's Party. Finally, sensing that all resistance is useless, the Catholic Center, directed by Monsignor Kaas, also dissolves. All the other small groups have dispersed by themselves, or have rallied to National-Socialism.

[Retained footnotes]

1. According to German law, it was enough for a grouping to count 500 members to be able to present a list of candidates to the Reichstag. During the elections of 5 March 1933, a first decree of Marshal Hindenburg had raised this figure to 60,000, thus beginning the reduction of the number of Parties.

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Having made a clean sweep, Hitler promulgated, on July 14, a law forbidding the creation of new parties. Henceforth the only recognized party would be the N.S.D.A.P. Finally, on December 1, 1933, this work found its crowning point in the Law for the Guarantee of the Unity of Party and State.

By virtue of this law, the N.S.D.A.P. was indissolubly bound to the State. “The Party,” Hitler declared, “represents the political conscience, the political conception, and the political will of the nation.” It was within the Party, guardian of doctrine and nursery of leaders, that all the leaders of the Third Reich would in future be recruited. Nation and Party came together in the person of Adolf Hitler, Führer of the nation and supreme head of the Party.

However — and this is a capital fact which must be emphasized —

1. Law forbidding the creation of new parties:

§ 1: The only political party existing in Germany is the National Socialist German Workers’ Party (N.S.D.A.P.).

§ 2: Whoever undertakes either to preserve the cadres of another party or to constitute a new party shall be punished by penalties which may go up to three years in prison, or varying between six months and three years in fortress detention, unless the acts committed are subject to more severe sanctions.

Berlin, July 14, 1933.
Hitler, Frick, Gürtner.

2. Law guaranteeing the unity of Party and State:

§ 1: 1. After the victory of the National Socialist revolution, the National Socialist Party (N.S.D.A.P.) is the incarnation of the very idea of the State. As such, it is indissolubly bound to the State. 2. It is a corporation under public law. Its statutes are established by the Führer.

§ 2: In order to assure close coordination between the services of the Party and of the S.A., on the one hand, and the public authorities, on the other, the Deputy of the Führer and the Chief of Staff of the S.A. are appointed members of the Government of the Reich.

§ 3: 1. Increased duties toward the Führer, the people, and the State fall upon the members of the N.S.D.A.P. and the S.A. (including the formations subordinate to them), for they represent the directing and driving force of the National Socialist State. 2. If they fail in these duties, they shall be brought before the special tribunals of the S.A. and of the Party. 3. The Führer reserves the right to extend these prescriptions to the members of other organizations.

§ 4: Every action or omission likely to diminish or compromise the existence, organization, effectiveness, or reputation of the National Socialist Party is considered a breach of duty, and, particularly among the S.A. (including the formations subordinate to them), every breach of order and discipline.

§ 5: In addition to the usual service penalties, offenders may be punished by strict arrest and imprisonment.

§§ 6 to 8: Annex provisions.

Berlin, December 2, 1933.

Hitler, Frick.

[Retained footnotes]

3. Let us note that from June 1933 onward, the Party would accept no new members, and that candidates would be admitted only after a strict investigation. Their total number is estimated at around 3 million.

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—the Party does not merge with the nation; it superimposes itself upon it. “The common goal and the close interpenetration of the two orders (Nation and Party),” writes Anton Lingg, “do not in any way mean that they are identical. They are united but not mixed, bound together but not confused.”

When the Reichstag was renewed on December 12, 1933, there would be only a single list, drawn up by Hitler himself. It would receive 39,626,000 votes out of 42,900,000, that is, 92.2 percent of the electorate, and Parliament would contain only 661 National Socialist deputies.

These elections mark the liquidation of the liberal State, founded on plurality of parties, and inaugurate the advent of the totalitarian regime.

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It remains to examine the administrative fusion of the Länder and the Reich, a field in which the problems were all the more difficult to solve because their roots reached back into a more distant past.

Many historical memories justified the federative character of the Wilhelmine Empire, which the Weimar Republic had inherited. But from the political point of view, this system had produced only disappointing results. The difficult thing was to suppress the Länder as administrative entities while safeguarding their personality, their customs, and their habits. All the more so because “suppressing the Länder” did not consist merely in erasing from the map of Germany a host of small principalities already half integrated; it also meant putting an end to the autonomy of Bavaria and Prussia.

One can easily imagine the resistance which so radical a reform could not fail to arouse, both in left-wing circles and in monarchist and reactionary circles. Until 1914, a muffled animosity had set the Hohenzollerns against the Wittelsbachs, and we know that Louis II of Bavaria, after 1870, had accepted entry into the Federation only reluctantly. Relations between

1. Anton Lingg, *The Party, Organized Will of the Nation*, *Völkischer Beobachter*, issue of January 30, 1936.

[Retained footnotes]

2. The Socialist Party itself had remained very attached to the federal system.

3. Or more exactly until 1918, which marked the accession of King Louis III.

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Catholic Bavaria and Protestant Prussia had always been tense, and everything suggested that their definitive fusion would not take place without raising serious difficulties.

But Hitler had seen, during his stay in Vienna, what happens to an empire which cannot overcome its internal divisions. He remembered that, in the aftermath of defeat, Kurt Eisner had broken the links between Munich and Berlin; that on various occasions Saxony and Thuringia had threatened to do as much; and that he himself had come up, on November 9, 1923, against the separatist designs of Lossow and von Kahr.

Conversely, on the eve of the signing of the Treaty of Versailles, had the officers of the Great General Staff not thought of sacrificing the Reich in order to save Prussia? How could he have forgotten — since the thing had happened barely nine months earlier — that Mr. von Papen had found himself obliged to appoint a Reich Commissioner in Prussia, and that two rival governments, both legitimized by a ruling of the Supreme Court of Justice, had claimed to exercise power there simultaneously? It was a situation whose recurrence could be avoided only by substituting for the federative system a strongly centralized unitary regime.

“A people which speaks the same language, which possesses the same culture, and whose destinies have been worked out across two thousand years of common history,” Hitler would declare at the Nuremberg Congress in September 1933, “can only aspire also to political unity. The new German Reich must not be erected on the basis of the Länder, but on the whole German nation and on the National Socialist Party, which embraces and unites within itself the totality of the nation...”

That is why unification — Gleichschaltung — would be the great affair of the year 1933. On March 31, Hitler promulgated a Provisional Law for the Coordination of the Länder of the Reich, which was completed on April 7 by a Law on the Statthalter, or Reich Commissioners.

1. See vol. I, p. 272.
2. See vol. I, p. 348.

[Retained footnotes]

4. Law on the Statthalter: § 1: In all the Länder of the Reich, with the exception of Prussia, the President of the Reich appoints Statthalter on the proposal of the Chancellor. Their mission is to see to the execution of the political directives issued by the Chancellor.

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Why were these two texts not promulgated at the same time? Because the creation of the Statthalter implied the disappearance of the Reich Commissioners, and these functions were exercised in Prussia

by Mr. von Papen. The entry into force of the new legislation was going to bring about his effacement to Göring's advantage. Now, this prospect displeased Marshal Hindenburg, who was reluctant to diminish the powers of a man for whom he had the highest esteem and whom he had placed in the government as a counterweight to the National Socialists.

Thus the week between March 31 and April 7 was entirely devoted to close negotiations between the four directly interested figures: Hindenburg, von Papen, Hitler, and Göring. Everything took place behind the padded doors of ministerial offices. The public was informed of nothing. But the documents of the period let us glimpse the feints and parries, the pressures and counter-pressures in which the four protagonists alternately engaged. Finally, the balance of forces imposed a solution, and the clashing of foils ended — in the most protocolary fashion in the world — with an exchange of letters whose ceremonious terms alone allow one to guess the bitterness of the struggle which had just ended.

On April 7 — the very day on which the Law on the Statthalter was promulgated — von Papen addressed the following message to Hitler:

Mr. Chancellor,

The law on the unification of the Länder and the Reich, promulgated today by the Cabinet of the Reich, has laid the foundations of a juridical edifice destined to assume historical importance in the political development of the German Reich. The step taken on July 20, 1932, by the government of the Reich which I had the honor to preside over, with a view to putting an end to the dualism existing between the Reich and Prussia, finds its crowning point

§ 2: Elected for the duration of a legislature, the Statthalter have the right to dissolve the Landtag, to designate and to revoke the President of the Council, to appoint and dismiss officials and judges.

Berlin, April 7, 1933.
Hindenburg, Hitler, Frick.

[Retained footnotes]

1. The Reich Commissioners had a temporary character, like paragraph 48 which instituted them. The Statthalter, on the other hand, have a permanent character.

2. Göring exercised the functions of Minister of the Interior in Prussia (see above, p. 88). He was subordinate in Prussia to von Papen, just as Hitler was subordinate, in the Reich, to Marshal Hindenburg.

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in the close coordination henceforth established between the interests of Prussia and those of the Reich. From now on, Mr. Chancellor, you will be in a position, as Prince Bismarck once was, to bind indissolubly the policy of the largest of the Länder of the Reich to that of the Reich itself.

Since the new law invests you with the right to appoint the President of the Council of Ministers of Prussia, I ask you kindly to inform the President of the Reich that I respectfully place in his hands the

functions of Reich Commissioner in Prussia.

Yours sincerely devoted,
Von Papen.

That same day, Hitler transmitted this letter to Marshal Hindenburg, adding the following comment:

Mr. President of the Reich,

Vice-Chancellor von Papen has addressed to me the letter which I hasten to bring to your attention.

Several days ago, Mr. von Papen had already informed me of the agreement reached between himself and Minister Göring concerning his voluntary withdrawal, because unity of governmental direction between the Reich and Prussia was henceforth assured by the new law on the unification of the Länder and the Reich.

On the evening of the promulgation of the new law on the establishment of the Statthalter, Mr. von Papen considered this goal achieved and asked me myself to proceed to the appointment of a President of the Council in Prussia, wishing thereby to reserve for himself the possibility of devoting all his time to the government of the Reich, to which he will continue to bring his cooperation as in the past.

By assuming the functions of Reich Commissioner in Prussia during the difficult period which followed January 30, Mr. von Papen had the very great merit of contributing powerfully to the maturation of the idea of close coordination between the policy of the Reich and that of the Länder.

His collaboration in the Reich Cabinet, to which he will henceforth be able to devote himself entirely, will be a precious aid to me. The feelings I have for him are so cordial that I rejoice in benefiting from his assistance, which will be of inestimable value to me.

Please accept, Mr. President, the expression of my deepest respect.

Adolf Hitler.

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Hindenburg yielded and wrote to von Papen:

Dear Mr. von Papen,

I have just accepted the request by which you ask me to relieve you of your functions as Reich Commissioner for Prussia. I seize this occasion to thank you, in the name of the Reich and in my own name, for the eminent services you have rendered the nation by eliminating the dualism existing between the Reich and Prussia and by imposing the idea of a common political direction for the Reich and the Länder. I have learned with satisfaction that you will henceforth be able to devote all your strength to the government of the Reich.

I remain, with feelings of sincere comradeship, your devoted,

Von Hindenburg, President of the Reich.

To finish, there remained face to face only the two happy winners of this chess tournament, and Hitler hastened to write to Göring:

From this day, I appoint you President of the Council in Prussia. I ask you to assume these functions in Berlin on April 20.

I am happy to be able to give you this testimony of my confidence and gratitude for the very great services you have rendered me during ten years of struggle within our Movement for the resurrection of our people, for the victory of the national revolution as Minister of the Interior in Prussia, no less than for the unshakable loyalty with which you have bound your destiny to my person.

The Chancellor of the Reich, Adolf Hitler.

And in fact the unification of the Länder and the Reich corresponded to one of the deepest aspirations of the German people. They had had enough of being torn apart by the constant threats of secession from provincial governments. For centuries they had dreamed of belonging to one and the same community. Yet in Saxony, in Württemberg, and in the Grand Duchy of Baden, things did not go as politely as in Berlin. Mr. Frick, Minister of the Interior of the Reich, had to have the police powers in these Länder given to him in order to impose unification on a recalcitrant opposition.

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In order to calm these disturbances and to spare certain acquired habits, Hitler decided to temper the ardor of the new Statthalter by recommending moderation to them. On July 6, he gathered them at the Chancellery palace and set out for them, in a short address, the principles by which they should be inspired in carrying out their task. He repeated to them that the nation expected from them not ideological postures but concrete achievements:

“The political parties have been definitively abolished,” he told them. “This is a historical event whose full significance has not yet been measured. We must now eliminate the last vestiges of democracy by emphasizing everywhere responsibilities and personal values...

“Existing institutions must be destroyed only when one has something better to put in their place. Many revolutions have seized power in the fire of first enthusiasm. Few are those which have been able to maintain themselves there and have known how to restore the broken equilibrium... It is not a question of revoking an industrialist on the pretext that he is not a National Socialist; still more so if the National Socialist whom one wishes to put in his place understands nothing of economic questions...

“At the present hour it is not a matter of propagating ideas, but of assuring daily bread to five million unemployed. It is the fact of giving them work which will establish our authority... Our program does not have the purpose of allowing us to make fine gestures, but of assuring the existence of the German people.

“Today the Party has become the State. All power resides in the hands of the central government. We

must prevent the center of gravity of German life from being transferred again to peripheral territories or to particular groupings. Power no longer belongs to any territorial fraction of the Reich, nor to any class of the nation, but to the people taken in its totality.”

When, on December 12, Hitler proceeded to the re-election of the Reichstag, he abstained from renewing the Landtage, which revealed his intention to suppress them sooner or later.

This suppression took place on January 30, 1934, the first

[Retained footnotes]

1. It is by virtue of this principle that Hitler kept, in his team, members of the former von Papen ministry, such as Messrs. von Neurath and Schwerin von Krosigk, and that he appointed Dr. Schacht President of the Reichsbank and Commissioner for Economic Affairs.

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anniversary of the seizure of power. One year, to the day, after his arrival at the Chancellery, Hitler promulgated the Law for the Reconstruction of the Reich. In its lapidary concision, this text, which transferred to the Reich the sovereignty of the Länder, brought to the structure of Germany a modification more profound than the two Constitutions of 1871 and 1919 had done.

What neither the Empire of Wilhelm II nor the Republic of Weimar had been able to accomplish, the National Socialist State realized with a stroke of the pen: January 30, 1934, marks the end of the “Federation of the German Länder” and the birth of the “centralized State of the Germanic Nation.” Henceforth there are no longer Prussians, Bavarians, Württembergers, and Saxons. There are only sixty-five million Germans, governed by the same laws.

It goes without saying that this “bringing into line” was not carried out without arbitrariness or violence. No opposition was tolerated; whoever did not agree was reduced to silence. The Party imposed its will with an iron fist. But these restrictions imposed on individual life had as their counterpart spectacular achievements on the collective plane. If the liberal bourgeoisie felt crushed, if Jews were mercilessly excluded from public offices, while waiting to be excluded

[Retained footnotes]

1. Law for the Reconstruction of the Reich: § 1: The representations of the Länder are suppressed. § 2: a) The sovereign rights of the Länder are transferred to the government of the Reich. b) The governments of the Länder are subjected to the government of the Reich. § 3: The Statthalter are subject to the authority of the Minister of the Interior of the Reich. § 4: The government of the Reich may modify the constitutional law of the Länder. § 5: The Minister of the Interior of the Reich shall promulgate the legal and administrative decrees necessary for the application of this law. § 6: This law shall enter into force on the day of its promulgation. Berlin, January 30, 1934. Von Hindenburg, Hitler, Frick.

2. A certain number of other laws would later complete the work of unification, notably the law of February 14, 1934 suppressing the Reichsrat as well as the diplomatic representations of the Länder

with the Reich; the second ordinance relating to the Reconstruction of the Reich, of November 27, 1934; finally the second law on the Statthalter of January 30, 1935 (second anniversary of the seizure of power), which reorganized the administration of the Communes according to the principle of autonomy recommended by Baron vom Stein and defined, more precisely, the powers of the Reich Commissioners.

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from many areas of the private sector, the great mass, as far as it was concerned, found advantage in it. It abandoned itself to the feeling of euphoria which always accompanies the appearance of a strong State after a long period of disorder and inefficiency.

However, unification was not yet complete: on public buildings as in official ceremonies, the black-white-red flag — restored by Hindenburg on March 11, 1933 — continued to fly beside the red flag with the swastika of the National Socialist Party. Then there were the relations between Chancellor and President, which remained what they had been under the Weimar regime. Despite all the powers concentrated in his hands, Hitler was not yet the supreme head of the State. He was subordinate to Marshal Hindenburg, whose prestige was immense, and whose prerogatives he had undertaken to respect.

Finally, there was the military problem, which was posed with acuity, for two distinct groups stood face to face: the Reichswehr, which was the President's army, and the S.A., which constituted the Chancellor's army. Now, both claimed to identify themselves with the State. How would Hitler overcome this dualism?

In the aftermath of the Kapp putsch, we saw the army split in two. "From March 1920 onward," we wrote, "the German army takes on the appearance of a river which divides into two branches: on one side the legal army, that is, the Reichswehr properly speaking; on the other, the whole of the illegal and secret formations."

We have now reached the end of this evolution, the point where the two branches of the river are going to rejoin. The Reichswehr had "held" for fifteen years, but it had ended by sinking into a kind of immobilism; while the illegal formations, regrouped around Hitler and enlarged along the way by a multitude of new forces, formed a boiling mass of several million individuals, rising like a wall in front of the regular army.

[Retained footnotes]

1. At the moment, no one imagines that the regime intends to go further.
2. See above, p. 107, note 1, paragraph 2 of the law of March 24, 1933. The Marshal-President is the supreme head of the army. It is he who appoints ambassadors. He has the right to dissolve the Reichstag and to proclaim a state of exception. Finally, he possesses a right of veto vis-à-vis the Cabinet. This right Hindenburg had delegated not to Hitler, but to von Papen, who moreover never made use of it.

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How would their fusion take place? Would these two forces merge, or devour one another in a desperate effort to triumph one over the other?

Everything depended on the decisions the Führer would take. But for the moment, he preferred not to rush matters. No doubt he thought it would be premature to transform the military constitution of the Reich before National Socialist doctrine had penetrated all layers of the nation. The Reichswehr formed a closed and enigmatic block whose deep intentions were still unknown...

But to these motives of an internal character were added others of an international order: to touch Germany's military status was to tear up all of Part V of the Treaty of Versailles. It was to risk provoking very sharp reactions in London and Paris.

Before proceeding to this decisive act, it would be necessary to know the disposition of the Allies. Above all, it was necessary to know what would come of the Disarmament Conference, whose laborious negotiations were continuing in Geneva.

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VII

THE FAILURE OF THE DISARMAMENT CONFERENCE AND THE REICH'S WITHDRAWAL FROM THE LEAGUE OF NATIONS (2 February 1932–1 August 1934)

The Preparatory Commission on Disarmament sat from May 1926 to January 1931. After six years of groping and fruitless effort, it had just managed to set up a Draft Convention which was only an empty framework.

When the Disarmament Conference opened at Geneva on February 2, 1932, would it at last lead to more concrete results? "One billion seven hundred million human beings are represented here," proclaimed Mr. Arthur Henderson in the opening speech he delivered before two hundred and fifty delegates from five continents. "It is the greatest international gathering seen since the end of the war... The world needs disarmament; the world wants disarmament... I refuse for a single instant to admit that this conference can fail, for its failure would have consequences so terrible that one does not dare think of them." Mr. Tardieu outdid the British delegate: "Today," he declared, "opinion is weary of so many meetings without effect. The world which watches us cries out to us: any commitment, even short, even limited, the simplest that may be, provided it is real; provided it lives; provided it asserts itself as substantial and productive of acts!"

But alas, it very quickly appeared that the Disarmament Conference would not proceed differently from the Preparatory Commission. Its procedure and its methods of discussion remained the same. None of the problems which paralyzed the work of the experts in 1931 was resolved, and

1. See vol. II, chapter XXIII, and particularly p. 867.

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since then a crowd of new problems had been grafted onto it.

Twenty-six countries had been represented on the Preparatory Commission. This time there were sixty-two, including the U.S.A. and the U.S.S.R., which was hardly designed to accelerate the discussions, since the final agreement had to take account of the geographical situation and special conditions of each State. Moreover, the sixty-two delegations at the Conference represented responsible governments. They therefore had to begin by revising all the work accomplished for six years by irresponsible experts. Only afterward could they approach the problems properly so called. Finally, armaments had been so perfected in recent years that one can affirm without exaggeration that there was more difference between the armaments of 1932 and those of 1918 than between those of 1918 and those of 1914.

One had been tempted to laugh at the delays and adjournments of the Preparatory Commission. The sterile agitation of six delegates bringing forth, after six years, an empty text whose clauses were, on top of that, all optional, could have served as the scenario for a comedy by Molière. Now, when one follows the work of the Conference itself, the desire to laugh disappears. The heart tightens when one leafs through the documents of the file one after another, for from this heap of contradictory plans and declarations there rises, ever more distinctly, the specter of war. At the end of this farce, there is a tragedy — for there is always a tragedy at the end of human stupidity.

1. Article 8 of the Covenant of the League of Nations.

[Retained footnotes]

2. Cf. *L'Europe nouvelle*, special issue of May 18, 1925, p. 470. The speed of fighter aircraft rose from 220 to 400 kilometers; their ceiling, from 6,000 to 11,000 meters. The load of bombers rose from 500 to 2,400 kilos, their speed from 125 to 350 kilometers, their ceiling from 3,000 to 9,000 meters. Aircraft armament rose from 2 machine guns to 8 and even includes automatic cannon. The explosive effect of bombs is increasingly sweeping. The incendiary materials they contain are practically inextinguishable. The speed of tanks, which was 4 to 12 kilometers at the end of the war, was raised to 40, 50, and even more than 100 kilometers for certain models. They weighed 10 to 20 tons in 1918. Now 90-, 100-, and 120-ton tanks are being built. Guns fired on average to 25 kilometers. Now their range reaches 60 and even 120 kilometers, etc.

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By what imperceptible slipping had things reached this point?

After meeting in Plenary Assembly under the presidency of Mr. Arthur Henderson, the Conference divided into several commissions. The General Commission, which included, as its name indicates, the representatives of all the States taking part in the Conference; the Political Commission, which dealt with all proposals concerning more especially international legal agreements and security; attached to this Commission was a Committee on Moral Disarmament, charged with studying questions of an intellectual, pedagogical, artistic (sic), etc., order. The bureau of this Committee was the same as that of

the General Commission, so that it too was presided over by Mr. Henderson.

Beside this Commission sat the Land Commission, the Naval Commission, the Air Commission, the Commission on National Defense Expenditures, assisted by the Committee on Effectives, and the Committee on Chemical and Bacteriological Weapons, specializing "in questions of definition." Finally, they had at their disposal a certain number of technical subcommittees, to which they entrusted the study of this or that particular point.

The Conference began by taking up the draft Convention where the Preparatory Commission had left it. The delegates set out in turn the point of view of their country. For some, the draft Convention was a basis; for others, it was a framework. But what did this subtle distinction mean?

"Above all, reduction," declared Norway. "Proportional reduction," replied the United States. "Reduction subordinated to the development of security," specified Yugoslavia, Poland, Romania, and Czechoslovakia, which, through the voice of Mr. Beneš, eloquently demonstrated the necessity of strengthening international justice. "Strengthening of sanctions," pleaded Mr. Yen, delegate of China. "Equality of rights among all nations and equalization of forces at the lowest levels," demanded Mr. Grandi, who declared that this thesis was the golden rule of Mussolinian policy. "Total reduction by total abolition,"

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Mr. Litvinoff obstinately repeated. "In short," Mr. Tardieu summarized in the name of France, "we want a disarmament obtained by the limitation of armaments and linked to the whole of the duties dictated by the Covenant."

As for Germany, its position was somewhat different. Throughout the duration of the Preparatory Commission, it had sought to obtain that the victorious countries lower their armaments to the level prescribed for Germany by the Treaty of Versailles. It had not succeeded. Now, what it demanded was the right to equip its own armaments at the level which the final Convention would grant to the other members of the League of Nations. What it asked was equality of rights. It did not admit that the members of the League of Nations should be divided into two categories, nor that Germany should be treated as a second-rank Power by being refused rights officially recognized to small exotic States such as Abyssinia, Haiti, or the Republic of Honduras.

"We are gathered here," declared Mr. Nadolny, delegate of the Reich, "to elaborate a general Disarmament Convention. This agreement must be valid for everyone, and consequently also for Germany. How could it be otherwise, since Germany is a member of the League of Nations, and a full member? Article 8 of the Covenant must apply to it as to all the other members. The Conference will surely not admit that special prescriptions, different from those of the Covenant, should be applied to certain members of the League, to the exclusion of the others... Consequently, the German government will be able to accept only a Convention whose clauses will be valid for it as for all the other signatory States."

"It would be premature," replied Mr. Henderson, "to discuss the application of the Convention before having set up the Convention itself. Let us begin by examining whether it would not be possible to forbid certain categories of particularly dangerous weapons."

[Retained footnotes]

1. French proposals (February 6); speech by Mr. Tardieu (February 8); American proposals (February 9); Chinese proposals (February 10); Czech and Polish proposals (February 11); Italian proposals (February 10); Romanian and Yugoslav proposals (February 17).

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The Conference then moved toward the notion that a distinction was possible between specifically defensive weapons and specifically offensive weapons. This is what was called “qualitative disarmament.” Having adopted this classification, the General Commission decided, on April 22, to charge the competent commissions

“to examine the series of land, sea, and air armaments, with a view to determining the weapons which have the most especially offensive characteristics, or which have the greatest effectiveness in the field of national defense, or which are the most threatening to civilian populations.”

Then it adjourned for the Easter holidays.

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Immediately after the holidays, the technical Commissions set to work. From the beginning, Germany declared that it was useless to waste time, for the work of discrimination had already been done by the Treaty of Versailles. If the Reich had been forbidden to possess military aviation, heavy artillery, tanks, and submarines, it was apparently because these weapons had been considered as being, par excellence, offensive weapons. The other Powers therefore had only to take the Treaty as their model and suppress them in their turn. England, Italy, and the U.S.S.R. showed themselves favorable to this thesis. But not the delegates of France and the Little Entente, who asked that the classification of weapons be made the subject of a new examination. The discussions therefore continued within the Commissions; they soon resulted in total confusion.

As regards artillery, the Land Commission concluded that “all artillery can be used for offensive and defensive purposes at the same time,” which is obvious enough. However, the most offensive guns were those whose caliber exceeded 250 mm. The Commission then distinguished

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1. Resolution of the General Commission, April 22, 1932.

2. In 1460, a Council had been held at the Vatican to forbid the use of the nascent artillery and to excommunicate the princes who might make use “of this artillery, then a barbarous weapon, contrary to the rules of military honor.” But certain cardinals having objected that in case of war against the Infidels, artillery could be useful for the propagation of the Faith, the Council separated without having decided anything.

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a second category including pieces from 100 to 250 mm., but without managing to agree on the nature of this category, or even to indicate below what caliber guns possess an exclusively defensive character. "This notion," the Commission gravely observed, "is wholly relative and depends on the whole of the means of action employed by each belligerent."

The discussion was still more lively on armored vehicles. A first difficulty arose concerning the difference to be established between tanks and armored cars. The Subcommittee of experts consulted on this subject declared "that no precise technical distinction can be established on this point."

The delegates of the U.S.S.R., Germany, Italy, Austria, Hungary, and the Netherlands, among others, affirmed that all categories of tanks were to be classed among the most dangerous offensive weapons.

England, Spain, and certain small States declared that "the degree of offensiveness of these machines is proportional to their weight," and that three categories should be established: tanks of less than 10 tons; those from 10 to 25 tons; finally those whose weight exceeds 25 tons. This last category would be "so offensive" that it would be appropriate to abolish it totally and immediately.

France, on the contrary, maintained that apart from tanks of more than 70 tons, there existed no technical reason allowing one to assert that armored vehicles were more specifically offensive than any other means of combat.

The points of view clashed still more sharply within the Naval Commission. No agreement could be reached either on ships of the line, or on aircraft carriers, or on submarines.

But it was in the Air Commission that the confusion reached its height. The experts could not even define types of aircraft. To obtain a practical result, it would be necessary to begin by forbidding all military aviation and controlling all civil aviation.

Then, to get out of the impasse of qualitative disarmament, Mr. Tardieu proposed approaching the problem from another angle.

"What is an offensive weapon?" he asked authoritatively. "Rather than between offensive and defensive weapons, one must

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distinguish between aggression, which is a political attitude, and the offensive, which is a mode of employing armaments. Any weapon can become offensive if it is employed with an intention of aggression. What must be limited are the possibilities of aggression, by endowing the League of Nations with international forces which will allow it promptly to punish the aggressor."

But this reasoning encountered a certain number of objections. First, it would be necessary to know what is meant by the aggressor; yet no definition of this term had yet been given. Next, it supposed that the thorny question of sanctions against the aggressor had been resolved, and on this point most States

showed themselves very reticent. Finally, it introduced the thought of aggression, which directed the problem onto a psychological plane where all discussion becomes impossible, for no Power permits its peaceful intentions to be called into doubt.

“Either armaments represent a threat to peace, and then they represent it in all States,” remarked the Italian delegate; “or else they are not a threat of war, and then they threaten no one. In that case there is nothing left but to dissolve the Conference...”

It was therefore necessary to abandon Mr. Tardieu’s thesis. “After five months of tangled and painful debates pursued in an atmosphere in which one breathes anything but sincerity, confidence, and enthusiasm,” the Conference had not yet taken a single step forward. It was then, on June 22, that Mr. Gibson, delegate of the United States, presented, in the name of President Hoover, a plan in which, for the first time, the problems of land, naval, and aerial disarmament were linked:

1. From the land point of view: reduction by one third of effectives, each country having the right, moreover, to a police force proportional to the average allotted to Germany by the peace treaties. Total suppression of tanks and heavy artillery;
2. From the naval point of view: suppression of one third of the tonnage and number of battleships, one quarter of the tonnage of aircraft carriers, cruisers, and destroyers, one third of the tonnage of submarines. Extension of the London Treaty to French and Italian naval forces;

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3. From the air point of view: suppression of all bombing aircraft and prohibition of all aerial bombardment.

“I wish to emphasize,” Mr. Gibson remarked, “the magnitude of the sacrifices to which my country would consent if this plan were adopted, for it would oblige it to destroy more than 300,000 tons of ships, more than 1,000 pieces of heavy artillery, 900 tanks, and 300 bombing aircraft.”

This declaration caused scarcely less astonishment than the plan for total disarmament proposed by Mr. Litvinoff in November 1927. Only this astonishment manifested itself in a more nuanced way, because of the authority attached to the person of the President of the United States. The Conference was in a sense put with its back to the wall. It had to say whether, yes or no, it was ready to leave the domain of fictions and descend to the plane of realities.

Germany and the U.S.S.R. greeted the Hoover proposal with enthusiasm. Italy made it known, through the voice of Mr. Grandi, “that it accepted the American plan in all its parts and that this acceptance was complete and without reservations.” But England remained silent and reserved judgment. Suppressing a third of its fleet appealed to it hardly at all. On the other hand, it did not wish to offend American opinion head-on. It would therefore be the French delegate who was charged with setting aside this dangerous firebrand by drowning the Hoover plan under floods of eloquence.

“The seductive simplicity of this plan,” he declared, “does not take sufficient account of the complexity of the problems... It should not be taken as a block which imposes itself, but as a basis for discussion... Several of its provisions require certain correctives. The application of a uniform scale to all States

could involve certain injustices... On the other hand, reductions of armaments must remain linked to the organization of international security...”

This was, with all the usual precautions, a polite rejection. “At Geneva,” said one delegate, “the flowers always smell of funerals.”

Yet the long holidays were approaching. The Conference did not dare to separate on results so meager. Mr. Beneš was therefore charged, as rapporteur, with drafting a resolution which, while containing a friendly allusion to the Hoover plan, would at the same time be acceptable to all countries. Germany tried in vain to have inserted into it a sentence explicitly recognizing equality of rights for it. After several days of laborious negotiations, the following text was submitted for the approval of the delegates:

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The Conference for the Reduction and Limitation of Armaments,

Deeply persuaded that the hour has come for all nations to adopt substantial and broad measures with a view to disarmament, to consolidate the peace of the world, hasten economic recovery, and lighten the financial burdens which currently weigh on all peoples,

Decides from now on and unanimously, drawing inspiration from the generous principles which are at the basis of the Hoover proposal:

1. That a substantial reduction of world armaments shall be carried out, which must be applied as a whole, by a general Convention, to land, naval, and air armaments;
2. That an essential goal to be attained is to reduce the means of aggression.

There followed, in “Annexed Conclusions,” a series of measures capable of being incorporated later into the general Convention, but “without prejudging in any way the later attitude of the Conference toward more extensive disarmament measures.”

When most of the delegates became acquainted with this text, they had difficulty hiding their disappointment. Mr. Gibson, in particular, regretted that the resolution did not accept the provisions of the Hoover plan more clearly.

“The Italian delegation,” declared General Balbo, “after having made sincere and tireless efforts with a view to bringing about the triumph of principles which, within the general framework of armaments, would have allowed the Conference to achieve positive results, finds itself obliged to declare that this effort has been vain or that, in any case, it has been absolutely insufficient in comparison with the wishes and hopes of the world.”

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Mr. Litvinoff, for his part, was still much more blunt:

“This resolution,” declared the delegate of the U.S.S.R., “will cause bitter disappointment to all persons and all organizations which have placed their hopes for peace in the Conference... Although the resolution begins by affirming that the hour has come for all nations to adopt substantial and extensive measures with a view to disarmament and to consolidate the peace of the world, the continuation of the text is the absolute negation of that affirmation. It seems to constitute, on the contrary, recognition of the fact that the States represented at the Conference did not consider that the hour had come to adopt a single decisive measure with a view to disarmament.”

Then he undertook, point by point, an analysis of the “conclusions,” and demolished them, one after another, with biting irony.

But the greatest sensation, without question, was caused by the declaration of the German delegate.

“The Conference has arrived at a decisive turning point,” Mr. Nadolny observed. “For months, the peoples of the entire world have followed, full of astonishment, the curious spectacle of its labors. They have seen pass before them a multitude of proposals, suggestions, and complicated discussions, without perceiving the least tangible result... Public opinion does not understand, I am sure, the delays in which this Conference has so often lost itself. In any case, it is of the opinion that the era of exchanges of views, preparations, and preliminary work must now be closed and that the era of achievements must finally begin. It is therefore necessary to ask whether the resolution which we have before us is of a nature to inaugurate this period. I admit that it inspires in me not much hope... Under these conditions, it is impossible for us to accept the resolution submitted to us, and my government has charged me to make the following declaration:

“The German government is ready to collaborate in the work of the Disarmament Conference in order to contribute with all its strength to the efforts made with a view to taking a truly decisive step toward general disarmament, in the sense of Article

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8 of the Covenant. However, its collaboration is possible only if the later work of the Conference proceeds on the basis of a clear and plain recognition of equality of rights among nations.

“The German government must point out from today that it cannot undertake to continue its collaboration in the event that a satisfactory solution of this decisive point for Germany has not intervened by the resumption of the work of the Conference.”

Forty-eight hours later, the German delegation had left Geneva.

That Germany refused to be treated as a second-order nation and that it wrapped its claims in considerations of a juridical order was, all in all, nothing very surprising.

But looking to the bottom of things, one perceives that the struggle for equality of rights was not dictated solely by motives of national self-respect, but also by the plans for reorganizing the Reichswehr on which the generals of the Bendlerstrasse had been working for some time. Sketched by

Seeckt and revised by Hammerstein, the German plan was conceived in such a way as not to clash frontally with the military clauses of the Treaty of Versailles. The principle of a professional army would be maintained — the German General Staff not being keen, for the moment at least, to re-establish conscription — but the term of service would be reduced from twelve years to six or even four. The effectives would be increased by around fifty thousand men, chosen from among the patriotic associations, this increase being justified by the reduction of the term of service and the necessity of maintaining order in a period of crisis. Finally, the units

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2. In a speech delivered at Magdeburg on September 4, 1931, General von Seeckt recommended the creation of an army of 200,000 men, serving six years and reinforced by a special cadre of 20,000 officer and NCO instructors, charged with establishing the link between the active army and the reserves. Supported by the 150,000 men of the security police, this army would be sufficient, according to him, to assure the security of the Reich in time of peace.

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would be equipped with more modern armament than the Treaty of Versailles allowed — tanks, heavy artillery, and airplanes — all in limited quantities.

But this reorganization of the Reichswehr was realizable only with prior recognition of equality of rights. It was therefore imperative for Germany to have the Allies specify that the Disarmament Convention would apply to it as to the others, and would automatically replace the military clauses contained in Part V of the Treaty of Versailles.

To this end, Mr. von Neurath, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Reich, addressed on August 29 a note to the French government which repeated, in summarized form, the whole of the German thesis:

1. The decisions taken by the Disarmament Conference have no significance for Germany because the resolution of July 22 leaves completely aside the question of knowing whether they will also apply to the Reich.
2. The Disarmament Convention elaborated by the Conference must replace, for Germany, Part V of the Treaty, which will become obsolete.
3. Germany demands equality of military rights, that is, the right to decide for itself the status of the army it needs to assure its security. To act otherwise would be to maintain it in the position of a subordinate nation.
4. Germany is ready to renounce all the weapons which the other Powers will likewise renounce.

Italian, English, and a large part of American opinion showed themselves favorable to this argumentation. But not French opinion, which saw in the German demand a maneuver designed to legitimize its rearmament. If political problems could be reduced to absolute truths, it would be easy to resolve them. But as Henri Lichtenberger very justly remarks, “there exists on these formidable questions no universally admitted truth, and everyone remains on his positions, which vary from

country to country.”

For the Germans, “equality of rights” was a demand

1. Cf. the declarations of the Minister of the Reichswehr to the New York Times, on

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August 8, and to the Resto del Carlino, on August 31, 1932.

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so solidly founded that it did not tolerate the slightest discussion. For the French government, it was a grave infringement of the stipulations of the Treaty, and in particular of the military clauses, which were one of the essential guarantees of its security. Now, France had had enough of seeing the fruits of its victory go up in smoke and of observing that every concession made to Germany served as the point of departure for a new demand. Thus the French government replied to Mr. von Neurath, on September 11, with a rather dry note which opposed to the German argumentation the text of the Treaty:

1. French doctrine has as its center and point of support Article 8 of the Covenant, specifying that the maintenance of peace requires the reduction of armaments and that one must tend toward general disarmament, not toward partial rearmaments.
2. Part V of the Treaty must remain intangible. There is found neither in the Treaty nor in the Covenant any clause according to which a general limitation of armaments should entail the obsolescence of the permanent stipulations inscribed in the Treaty.
3. The whole question remains dominated by Article 164 of the Treaty, which stipulates: “Germany declares that it undertakes from now on, for the time when it shall be a member of the League of Nations, that the armament fixed in the annexed tables shall not be exceeded, and remains subject to being modified by the Council of the League of Nations, whose decisions in this respect it undertakes strictly to observe.”
4. Consequently, the League of Nations alone is competent to settle this debate. France can do nothing by itself, and separate conversations are useless and without object.

The opposition between the two theses therefore appeared absolute. However, as solidly founded as it might be in law, the French position came up against certain practical difficulties. If the work of the Conference was to have no repercussions on Germany’s military status, why was there such insistence that Germany participate in it? Would it not be more logical for the other Powers to reach agreement without Germany, while reserving the right to notify it afterward of the results obtained?

That is impossible, one will reply, because Germany, being a member of the League of Nations and possessing a permanent seat on the Council, enjoys the same rights as the other members of the League and cannot be excluded from the

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conference table. But then, how reconcile the full rights which the Reich possesses as a member of the League with the restrictions imposed on it by the Treaty of Versailles, and why was it brought into the League of Nations?

It was because Germany had been admitted to it following the Conference of December 12, 1927, at the end of which it had been decided to put an end to the activity of the Military Control Commission and where, without giving the Reich an explicit and definitive discharge, the delegates of France, England, Belgium, Italy, and Japan had nevertheless recognized that the Reich had satisfied, in broad outline, the prescriptions of disarmament.

But why, one will object again, was this certificate of satisfaction given to Germany, since it seems decided that no account should be taken of it?

It was because the question of disarmament was not, at that time, the only factor in the situation. It was not even the essential factor. The Dawes Plan, elaborated following the failure of the occupation of the Ruhr, tended to reconstruct the economic edifice of the continent, and this reconstruction — desired and ratified by the Allies — could take place only with Germany's collaboration. It had therefore been necessary to admit the Reich to Geneva...

Between the Dawes Plan, which aimed to recreate a European equilibrium, and the rigorous maintenance of the peace treaty, which divided Europe into two unequal camps, French diplomacy hesitated, caught in a network of contradictions which made its argumentation more fragile from day to day.

On September 14, Mr. von Neurath addressed to Mr. Henderson a letter in which he informed him "that Germany will not be able to resume its place at the Conference so long as the question of equality of rights has not been resolved."

On September 28 there opened at Geneva the XIIIth session of the Assembly of the League of Nations. This opening took place "under a gloomy sky and in an atmosphere still duller and more dismal than the autumn sky or the waters of the lake. The delegations are generally few in number and observe one another. Most of the delegates keep a distrustful silence or converse in low voices as in the corridors of a clinic. The public galleries are poorly filled."

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That is because there was a dying man behind the doors of the palace on the Quai Wilson: it was the Disarmament Conference, which was in agony and whose odors of decomposition poisoned the atmosphere.

Yet something had to be done to get out of this impasse. The delegates of England and Italy put pressure on France to bring it to take a "more realistic" attitude. France finally yielded before the insistence of Sir John Simon and Baron Aloïsi. On December 11, an official communiqué recognized in principle equality of rights for Germany, subject to discussing at the Conference the modalities of its

application. On the basis of this declaration, Germany made it known that it was ready to resume its place at the Disarmament Conference.

“There will no longer be, henceforth, two weights and two measures in the question of military statutes, but a single equal right for all,” declared Mr. von Neurath in his speech of December 21. “The Disarmament Convention elaborated by the Conference will be applicable to us as to all the other Powers and will replace Part V of the Treaty of Versailles. Let us beware, however, of crying victory, for the modalities of application of equality of rights still remain to be defined.”

That was the delicate point. The declaration of December 11 had only closed the first phase of the debates. The second phase began.

When the Disarmament Conference resumed its work — in the presence of the German delegation — the situation in Europe had been profoundly transformed. Hitler had become Chancellor of the Reich. The explosion of national pride

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1. Declaration of December 11, 1932: “The Governments of the United Kingdom, France, and Italy have declared that one of the principles which should serve as guides to the Disarmament Conference should be the granting to Germany, as well as to the other Powers disarmed by the Treaty, of equality of rights in a regime which would include security for all nations, and that this principle should find its expression in the Convention which will contain the conclusions of the Disarmament Conference. This declaration implies that the respective limitations of armaments of all States should be inscribed in the projected Disarmament Convention. It is clearly understood that the modalities of application of such equality of rights remain to be discussed at the Conference.”

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which accompanied his arrival in power and the dizzying rise of the Assault Sections, supported by the bellicose doctrines of Mein Kampf — whose violently anti-French passages had not gone unnoticed — had in no way contributed to relaxing minds. Kept on edge by a press which did not hide its hostility toward fascism (the moment was not far off when Paul-Boncour would call Mussolini a “Carnival Caesar”), Parisians expected every evening to be awakened by the rumble of German bombers. No doubt these fears were premature. They nevertheless betrayed a true psychosis of anxiety. Thus the delegates met in Geneva in an atmosphere loaded with mistrust and apprehension.

Mr. Norman Davis, the American delegate, spoke first, to read a Message of Peace which Franklin Roosevelt had just addressed to the world:

“The hour is grave,” proclaimed the President of the United States. “Either the world will succeed in banishing the specter of war, or it will move toward a new generalized conflict. The only means of avoiding it is a broad and sincere agreement on disarmament. This agreement can be realized only by a general and substantial reduction of existing armaments. May God bless your work, and guide you on the path which leads to prosperity and peace.”

After that, the delegates set back to work. From their first sitting, they found themselves placed before

a certain number of plans, elaborated since the preceding session by America, France, and England.

The American plan consisted in inscribing in a “Provisional Arrangement” the results obtained on July 23, 1932. This done, a Permanent Commission would be appointed to substitute itself for three years for the Disarmament Conference. It would include sixty-two members (that is, one per State) and would study, on the one hand, the question of equality of rights, and on the other, that of security. When it had succeeded in its work, the Conference would be convened again. But when Mr. Davis was asked to specify what he meant by the “results obtained on July 23,” he took up one by one the provisions of the Hoover plan. Now, the Conference had already shown its slight eagerness to adopt the solutions recommended by the former President of the United States.

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The “French plan,” or Herriot plan, rested on other principles:

1. Land forces intended for the defense of the metropolitan frontiers of the States of continental Europe will be brought back to a uniform general type — that of a national army of short-term service and limited effectives, not lending itself to a sudden offensive.
2. Professional effectives or those serving for the long term (instructors, specialists, and cadres) will be delimited on common bases and in relation to the effectives of these armies.
3. The effectives of metropolitan police forces of a military character, and notably those which are barracked, will be limited according to a basis of calculation common to all signatory States.
4. Heavy artillery and tanks of great power will be forbidden.
5. There will gradually be realized among the contracting Powers a modification of war matériel, its manufacture being controlled and organized internationally.
6. There will be organized among the contracting Powers a regular and permanent control of the execution of their obligations concerning their armaments. This control will include an investigation at least once a year.
7. This system will be established by successive stages, whose time limits remain to be fixed.

This plan, which tended to replace the Reichswehr by a short-term militia — a formula considered less offensive than a professional army — recalled Marshal Foch’s initial project at the Paris Conference, and perhaps it would have brought peace to the world if it had been inscribed in 1919 in the Treaty of Versailles. But coming in 1933, it had only one fault: it arrived fourteen years too late. It also offered two serious disadvantages. At an hour when States were pressed to reach a result, it postponed concrete achievements into an indefinite future; next, it raised the thorny question of international control, of which no one, to tell the truth, wished to hear.

To avoid this reef and give the Conference a new impulse, Mr. MacDonald in turn submitted a “British plan,” which he had discussed at length with the members of his Cabinet, and notably with his Foreign Secretary, Sir John Simon. The latter considered that

it would be appropriate to make a concession to Germany — not too great, obviously, but a safety valve capable of deflating certain arguments of its propaganda.

When he mounted the rostrum on March 16, 1933, the Assembly was gathered in full strength. The amphitheater of the Palace of the League of Nations was packed. Journalists crowded into the galleries, for they had been warned that the British Premier's intervention would cause a sensation. Their expectation would not be disappointed. In the course of an hour-long speech, stuffed with figures and statistics, Mr. MacDonald set out the broad lines of his plan.

Germany would be granted the right to double the effectives of the Reichswehr by raising them to 200,000 men. France would be invited to lower its effectives to the same level. But to the 200,000 men which it would keep in the metropole would be added 200,000 others intended for the defense of its colonies. Italy would have 200,000 men for its metropole and 50,000 men for its overseas possessions. Poland — whose population was nevertheless half as large as Germany's — would also be entitled to an army of 200,000 men, Czechoslovakia to 100,000, and the U.S.S.R. to 500,000. By adding together the forces of all the countries allied to France, that is, Poland, Belgium, and the Little Entente, one arrives at a total of 1,025,000 men, opposed to the 200,000 soldiers of the new Wehrmacht. This disparity would be further increased by the fact that Germany would not have the right to possess an air force, while France would be authorized to have 500 airplanes, Poland 200, Belgium 150, and the Little Entente (Czechoslovakia, Yugoslavia, Romania) 550.

This plan, completed by a certain number of regional pacts of mutual assistance, could be realized by stages, within a period of five years.

Most of the delegations approved it without reservations. Italy rallied to it, though in a more reticent fashion, for it found the number of airplanes granted to the Little Entente too high and wished to have a larger colonial contingent. But it was toward Berlin that all eyes now turned.

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1. The total number of airplanes in service at that time in these different countries was: 5,046 for France; 350 for Belgium; 700 for Poland; and 650 for Czechoslovakia. (Official statistics of the League of Nations.)

How would Hitler react to these proposals? No doubt they represented a concession to Germany, but they were still far from equality of rights. Would the Führer acquiesce in them and voluntarily bind his hands by entering into a network of pacts and limitations, or would he reject them, at the risk of being driven into a dangerous isolation?

On May 17, Hitler assembled the Reichstag and replied both to MacDonald's proposals and to

President Roosevelt's message of peace. His speech was an acceptance of the British plan and an unreserved approval of Roosevelt's proposals, offering to serve as guarantor of general disarmament.

"The realization of the project of the President of the United States, namely the intervention of the powerful American Republic as guarantor of peace in Europe, would bring great reassurance to all those who sincerely aspire to peace," he declared. "The German government regards the British plan as an acceptable basis of discussion for the solution of this problem... The German government will find no prohibition on armament too radical, if it applies without distinction to all countries..."

This speech was approved unanimously by the Reichstag. It was not only the object of positive comment from the German people; it received a favorable reception abroad. Mr. Henderson, President of the Disarmament Conference, "noted with satisfaction the fact that Germany does not intend to arrive at equality of rights solely by the elevation of its own armaments, but also by a reduction of the armaments of others." Eden called this speech "a serious encouragement for the Conference." The Archbishop of York considered "that the proposals made by Hitler in his speech of May 17 are a precious contribution to the establishment of peace." A few days later, Mr. Norman Davis, representative of the United States, took position in his turn:

"Disarmament requires reciprocal concessions," he declared. "It would have been neither just nor wise on the part of the victors — and such moreover was not their intention —

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to impose forever upon the Central Empires a special regime in matters of armaments. There existed, and there still exists for the other Powers signatory to the peace treaties, the corresponding obligation to reduce their own armaments by successive stages to the lowest level compatible with the requirements of their security."

Optimism was reborn. "The MacDonald plan," declared the Manchester Guardian, "has cast a ray of light into the darkness and confusion in which the Conference was struggling. At last one can glimpse a way out of these interminable discussions."

It seemed that an agreement was henceforth possible. Would advantage be taken of it to put Hitler with his back to the wall and oblige him to enter an international system from which it would be all the more difficult for him to escape later because he would have freely and voluntarily subscribed to it?

No. For Mr. Paul-Boncour pointed out that this plan did not offer sufficient guarantees for France. First, it took no account of the tens of thousands of S.A. and S.S. men who gravitated around the Reichswehr and were capable of furnishing it with a mass of trained reserves in case of mobilization; next, although it evoked a limitation of land and air forces, it passed completely in silence over naval disarmament; finally, it provided no procedure for control of disarmament.

"What do you mean by control of disarmament?" the Soviet delegate sarcastically threw out. "No one has yet disarmed. Wait at least until there is something to control!"

Yet Mr. Paul-Boncour persisted. Not only did he maintain his point of view, but he ended by making it prevail, despite the protests of the English and Italians, who attributed his intransigence to the will to

make no concession to a fascist regime. No longer knowing what to do and fearing to see every possibility of agreement vanish, the General Commission decided to charge a Drafting Committee with “defining methods of control compatible with respect for national sovereignties.”

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2. On this point, essential for it, England intended to reserve complete freedom of action.

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But who does not see that this formula is a contradiction in terms, since all control is, by definition, a limitation of the principle of sovereignty? Thus one should not be surprised if the members of the Drafting Committee could agree on nothing and if, to conceal their failure, they were obliged to refer study of the question to a Subcommittee of jurists.

Then the delegate of Germany grew angry.

“The question of control is secondary,” he declared in a peremptory tone, “so long as equality of rights has not been defined. This was granted to the Reich, in principle, by the declaration of December 11, 1932. Now, nothing has been done since then to specify its modalities of execution. Germany asks that this question be approached immediately, the question which Mr. Henderson himself declared to be the capital problem of the Conference in his note of September 18, 1932. Germany asks that this equality be effective within one year; failing that, it will resume its full freedom of action.”

The delegates were stunned to see suddenly reappear a demand which they believed definitively buried. For nearly ten years they had been going round in circles, without daring to look the true problem in the face. And each time Germany put back on the table the question which was, effectively, the capital question of the Conference, there was the same disarray. “Convinced that between Germany’s pressing demand to see the Conference discuss and recognize equality of rights and the certainty that such a discussion would lead to a fatal failure,” Mr. Henderson decided, on June 29, to adjourn the Conference until October 16. To gain time, to prolong the discussion — that was all he could do. Yet no one was deceived: if in the autumn the Conference reached a new impasse, this time it would no longer be a disappointment. It would be the final fiasco.

When, on October 16, 1933, the Disarmament Conference once again resumed its work, once again the situation had changed.

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On April 10, in order to respond to certain attacks by the foreign press, visibly inspired by émigré circles, Goebbels had decreed the boycott of all Jewish shops. As a result, anti-German propaganda redoubled in intensity. The League of Nations was seized of a host of motions of protest. The Zionist congresses, the anti-fascist leagues, and the Marxist committees became involved. They had little difficulty in persuading the governing circles of Paris, London, and Washington “that by pursuing culture and science, freedom of conscience and Christian morality with a destructive fury against all

progress, Hitler endangers the very foundations of civilization.” Under these conditions, to negotiate with him would be the worst of crimes. The least concession made to him at Geneva would strengthen his position, while a non possumus would precipitate his fall. For his power was by no means as solid as he claimed. Already a muffled opposition was manifesting itself in his Party; already rivals were polishing their weapons and preparing to oust him. Certain well-informed minds even assured people that his end was near. The last Chancellors of the Reich had hardly lasted more than a year. It would be very surprising if Hitler survived longer than they.

It was in this atmosphere, scarcely favorable to a realistic appreciation of things, that diplomatic conversations between Paris, London, and Washington were begun. “They revolve,” writes L’Europe nouvelle, “around two questions: the organization of control, to the principle of which the recent manifestations of Hitlerian policy make the English more favorable, and the equality of rights demanded by the Germans, with the interpretation they give it, that is, the faculty of effectively rearming.”

The French thesis remained unshakably attached to the following principles:

1. Establishment of regular and automatic control of the state of armaments with the aid of a permanent Commission organized in regional committees;
2. Continuation of control for a certain duration, constituting a trial period at the end of which, if the control

[Retained footnotes]

1. Notably, on May 12, a protest emanating from the Jewish minorities of Silesia.

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had given satisfactory results, that is to say, had brought to light the good faith of all the Powers, the first stage of effective disarmament would be undertaken by all;

3. Sanctions would be taken in cases of serious breaches of the sincerity which the control has the purpose of bringing to light;
4. Immunity would be assured to all “good faith” informers who revealed to the authorities of control the infractions committed;
5. Once the trial period and the first stage of disarmament were completed, the question of equality of rights would again be considered.

Italy rose up against “these inapplicable and out-of-date conceptions.”

“So you want to go back ten years?” exclaimed Baron Aloïsi. “How do you want to impose on Germany today methods which already failed in 1923?”

As for Germany itself, it was resolutely hostile to a project which put off examination of equality of

rights until the Greek calends. Moreover, it reared up at the mere word “sanctions,” for these, quite obviously, could be directed only against it and the countries disarmed by the Treaty of Versailles: what could be “sanctioned” among the other Powers, whose armaments were subject to no limitation?

On September 15, in an address delivered before representatives of the foreign press, Mr. von Neurath deplored the reversal which had occurred since June 29 and suggested that it would be vain to hope that the Reich would rally to a formula similar to the one people were seeking to impose upon it.

“We do not reject a priori the principle of international control,” he declared, “but on condition that it apply identically to all States.”

The next day, Mr. Frick, Minister of the Interior of the Reich, speaking at the Congress of the Hitler Youth, renewed this affirmation, but in less diplomatic terms:

“If one tries to maintain the German people in the role of pariah,” he proclaimed, “and if one obstinately denies it equality of rights, no one will be astonished if Germany

1. Cf. the semi-official article of the Popolo d’Italia of September 15, 1933.

[Retained footnotes]

2. Date on which the Conference had suspended its work.

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refuses to play this game any longer and withdraws from all international Conferences!”

From then on the Powers were warned: if they persisted in their point of view, there would be a rupture.

On September 22, Sir John Simon was in Paris, where he had a long interview with Mr. Paul-Boncour. The latter persuaded his English colleague to adopt a common line of conduct in face of the German demand.

On September 26 there opened at Geneva the XIVth Assembly of the League of Nations. Sensing the growing risks of rupture, Italy sought to play the role of mediator between France and Germany. The two Italian delegates, Mr. Suvich and Baron Aloïsi, suggested a compromise formula: the strongly armed Powers would immediately carry out the first stage of disarmament inscribed in the French project. An international Commission would then be instituted, which would verify the level of German armaments at the same time as the results obtained in the other countries. All Powers thus being subject to certain limitations, control would lose the vexatious character which made it unacceptable to Germany.

But the French, English, and American delegates refused to discuss this proposal. One sees appear, for the first time, what would later be called “the front of the democracies.”

On September 28, Mr. Paul-Boncour had an interview with Mr. von Neurath. The French delegate informed the German minister of the views of London, Paris, and Washington on the means most

suitable for saving the Conference.

“It is indispensable to institute automatic and permanent international control,” he told him. “This control must first pass through a trial period. If the control proves effective, disarmament by stages will then be undertaken.”

Mr. von Neurath gave a most reserved reception to Mr. Paul-Boncour’s exposition and returned to Berlin after a conversation with Sir John Simon, who handed him a sketch of the Convention in preparation.

On October 4, Mr. Henderson convened the bureau of the Conference for the 9th.

On October 6, Mr. von Neurath transmitted to London the reply of the German government to the proposals settled

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in the Paris conversations. Germany did not take a position on the question of control, but it categorically rejected the trial period; it accepted transforming the Reichswehr into an army formed of contingents recruited for short terms, following the principle inscribed in the MacDonald plan. It claimed the right to rearm as soon as the first stage of disarmament had been carried out by the other Powers. It intended to have all the weapons which the other countries would be authorized to possess, only their quantity being able to be made the object of discussion.

After several days of great diplomatic activity, during which the common attitude of the French, English, and American delegations was confirmed concerning “the impossibility of admitting a rearmament of Germany and the necessity of making the functioning of control pass through a trial period,” Sir John Simon intervened with Mr. Nadolny to make him aware of the Franco-Anglo-American decisions. He let him know that they were irrevocable and invited the German government to answer yes or no.

Two days later, on October 14, the bureau of the Conference met again. During the sitting, a secretary handed a telegram to Mr. Henderson. It was the reply of the German government: Hitler made it known that Germany was withdrawing both from the Disarmament Conference and from the League of Nations.

That same evening, the Führer delivered a major speech by radio in order to justify his decision:

“It has been said that the German people and the German government have demanded a surplus of weapons,” he declared. “That is absolutely inaccurate. They have asked only equality of rights. If the world decides to destroy weapons down to the last machine gun, we are ready to accept such a convention. If the world decides that certain weapons are to be destroyed, we are ready to renounce them in advance. But if the world grants certain weapons to each people, we are not disposed to let ourselves be excluded from their use, like a second-rank people.

“We are ready to take part in all Conferences, we are ready to subscribe to all Conven-

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...tions — but only on condition of enjoying equal rights. As a private man, I have never forced myself on a society that did not want my presence or that considered me an inferior. I have never forced anyone to receive me, and the German people have no less pride than I do. Either we shall have equal rights, or the world will no longer see us at any Conference.

“A plebiscite will be organized so that every German citizen may say whether I am right or whether he disapproves of me.”

Hitler’s telegram and Germany’s withdrawal from the League of Nations spread consternation in Geneva circles. Germany had indeed declared several times that it would leave the Conference if its demands were not acted on, but no one had taken this threat seriously. “They will never dare,” the delegates said to themselves. Now the powerless plenipotentiaries approach one another in the corridors and anxiously ask what the future will be made of. People speculate on a failure of the plebiscite; they hope that the German people will refuse to ratify Hitler’s action and that the opposition will seize this opportunity to try to overthrow him.

But on December 12 Germany ranges itself as one man behind its leader, who receives 40,601,577 votes, that is, 95% of all voters. And how could it be otherwise? On the ground on which Hitler has put the question — that is, national honor — anyone voting “no” would feel that he was failing in his duty.

Germany’s departure has dealt the death blow to the Disarmament Conference. It meets once or twice more. Then it goes into suspension, at the request of its president. Interest shifts and moves away from Geneva. The last phase of the talks — from December 1933 to April 1934 — takes place in the form of direct negotiations between Paris, Berlin, London, and Rome.

It is Germany, first of all, that reopens the conversations. In its Memorandum of December 18, 1933, it begins by establishing “that no one any longer believes in general disarmament, and that it is time to free oneself from an illusion that has done more to poison international relations

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than to clarify them.” Taking up the MacDonald plan again, the German government proposes to transform the professional Reichswehr into an army of 300,000 men serving for short periods and equipped with defensive weapons, which will be handed over to it as its transformation proceeds.

In its Aide-Memoire of January 1, 1934, France replies that before discussing, Germany must resume its place at Geneva, and repeats M. Daladier’s formula: “When one wants to negotiate, one does not begin by breaking off.” It rejects the army of 300,000 men as a form of rearmament incompatible with the aim and the name of the Conference. In addition, the German note passes over in silence the police and the paramilitary formations (S.A. and S.S.), which could reinforce the army proper at any moment.

In place of the German project, France advocates a formula for disarmament achievable in two stages: in the first, the French and German armies would be reduced to a uniform type of short-term militia, the

effectives granted to Germany being equal to those of the French metropolitan forces. Once this first stage had been completed, and rigorous control instituted, the unification of armaments would gradually be carried out.

The German Memorandum of January 19, 1934, makes it known that the Reich cannot subscribe to these conditions, which are incompatible with the principle of equality of rights, since the German army would be equipped with the same weapons as the other armies only after their complete transformation, that is, after several years. Parity in effectives would likewise be deceptive, for France leaves aside the question of colonial troops, which could be rapidly incorporated into the metropolitan divisions. Finally, Germany's return to the League of Nations could not be the prelude but the conclusion of the negotiations.

As can be seen, there is an abyss between these two conceptions; but it is an abyss over which England is going to try to throw a bridge. The results of the December 12 plebiscite have given the British Cabinet something to think about. They have proved to it that, for the moment, one must not count on Hitler's fall, that the dictatorship is stabilizing itself in Germany,

[Retained footnotes]

1. This is the principle inscribed in the Herriot project.

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and that those who predicted its approaching end were taking their desires for realities. Accustomed to reason on facts, not on abstractions, the British government tells itself that the Führer will never renounce equality of rights, but that his acceptance in principle of the MacDonald plan "as a possible basis for discussion" is a last plank of safety, an opportunity that must not be allowed to escape at any price. If it is not seized, the continent will be delivered over to adventures...

On January 29 England addresses to the various Powers a note in which it reaffirms the linkage between the questions of security and disarmament. But it recognizes that certain arms cannot be granted to some States while being forbidden to others. From the point of view of German effectives, the United Kingdom government would favor a figure intermediate between the 200,000 men proposed by M. MacDonald and the 300,000 men requested by Hitler. What matters above all is to succeed in achieving parity between the French, German, Italian, and Polish armies. England would like all these countries to have armies of identical type, formed of contingents serving for short periods. As regards heavy artillery, England proposes a general limitation of certain types. Germany would be authorized to have assault tanks of less than six tons. For aviation, the project provides for a two-year delay, during which an attempt would be made to abolish military aviation altogether. If this attempt fails, the Reich will have, in two years, the right to build an air fleet too.

The French Reply of February 14, 1934, far from bringing the points of view closer together, accentuates the divergences still further. Parity in effectives, it declares, must be limited to metropolitan forces, to the exclusion of colonial troops. On the other hand, it must include the police and the paramilitary formations such as the S.A. and S.S. But the essential and initial point is control. This must be instituted before, and not after, the transformation of the armies.

In this battle of notes, in which Berlin and Paris oppose the S.A. to colonial infantry, and the S.S. to Senegalese riflemen, the English government feels that only personal contacts would be capable of eliminating the principal points of friction.

[Retained footnotes]

1. It will be recalled that in 1919, at the Peace Conference, the English delegation supported and caused the opposite point of view to triumph. (See vol. I, p. 313.)

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Thus M. Baldwin charges M. Eden, Lord Privy Seal, with touring the capitals in order to negotiate there with the heads of government. On February 17 M. Eden is in Paris; on the 21st he arrives in Berlin, where he has a long interview with Hitler. Germany, the Chancellor tells him, accepts the English plan subject to certain modifications of detail: the Reich cannot wait two years before ensuring its air security. But it is ready to be content with an air force equal to half of the French fleet, or to one third of the total of those of its neighbors, at the choice of the contracting parties. For the S.A. and the S.S., Germany is prepared to enact measures capable of guaranteeing their non-military character. Finally, it agrees that the other countries should not reduce their armaments until after a period of five years.

On February 26 M. Eden arrives in Rome. He is received at the Palazzo Venezia by Mussolini. The Duce shows himself ready to accept, he too, the broad lines of the British plan. However, he does not believe that the standardization of the French, German, Italian, and Polish armies is practicable, for each has a different task to perform. To M. MacDonald's overly schematic system, he prefers the formula advocated by Hitler — creation of a German army of 300,000 men, stabilization of the other armies at their present level — as being more in conformity with the geographical necessities and the historical becoming of each nation.

While M. Eden thus goes from capital to capital, public opinion is disturbed by the slowness of the talks. Voices are raised to remind statesmen that behind procedures and protocols there are concrete and formidable problems on which millions of human lives depend:

“There are only two ways to prevent Germany's rearmament,” declares Count de Broqueville, Belgian Minister of Foreign Affairs, “and both lead to the same result.

“The first consists in applying the juridical means provided by the Treaty. This is the famous Article 213, which allows the League of Nations to prescribe investigations following a vote issued by a majority of the Council. But it is certain that at least two of the Powers that have a permanent seat

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on the Council — England and Italy — will refuse to vote for an investigation. Under these conditions Germany will refuse to submit to it.

“There remains, therefore, only the second means: preventive war. In my eyes, this means is a remedy worse than all the ills, and one can contemplate it only on condition of being struck by madness or animated by criminal inclinations. There is only one way, I repeat, to prevent Germany from rearming: immediate war. For my part, I refuse to precipitate my country into such an adventure.

“I feel as keenly as you the bitterness of the present situation. It is the consequence of a great illusion — the one committed by the men who drafted the Treaty of Versailles, without taking sufficient account of the lessons of history...

“One must have the courage to look realities in the face. In this domain, dreams lead to nothing, except catastrophes.

“What is at issue? Not simply knowing whether one will tolerate or not tolerate Germany’s rearmament, but whether one will avoid an arms race that will inevitably lead to war.”

A few days later, Mussolini, examining the European situation, in turn utters this cry of alarm:

“The present situation is extremely grave... I believe that no Power in the world will be able to prevent Germany from rearming. There would be only one means for that: preventive war. Certain circles may envisage it as a hypothesis, but the French people has no sympathy for it. The occupation of part of German territory would today meet with such resistance that preventive war would soon be transformed into a generalized conflict, which would last a very long time and would cost immense sacrifices both in men and in money.

“If one sets aside the idea of preventive war, but allows an arms race to be established, then, unfailingly, at a given moment in history a new war will break out, tearing the nations of Europe into two camps, standing against each other in a struggle to the death.”

The events rush forward during the following days.

[Retained footnotes]

2. Article in Popolo d’Italia of May 13, 1934.

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“Germany can no longer, under any circumstances, be subjected to a military status similar to that prescribed by the Treaty of Versailles,” declares the Reich government in its Memorandum of March 13; “this is a fact universally recognized for a long time already. It is confirmed by the recent proposals of the British and Italian governments, as well as by all the projects discussed at the Conference since the submission of the French plan on November 14, 1932.”

“The Part V of the Peace Treaty must remain intangible, and we are determined to maintain it whatever happens,” replies M. Barthou in his note of March 17. “To have it respected, the re-establishment of control is not sufficient, for it is not a guarantee in itself, but a means ‘of putting guarantees into effect.’ Any violation of the Treaty must be punished with sanctions all the more severe as the violation is more grave. Any breach of an undertaking made toward the international community must be considered as a

threat to the community itself.”

On March 22 Germany publishes its military budget for the fiscal year 1934-1935. Special expenditures are provided there for the transformation of the professional Reichswehr into short-term militias, the renovation of naval materiel, and the beginning of the construction of an air fleet.

On March 24 and the following days, Lord Tyrrell, British ambassador in Paris, has several conversations with M. Barthou. He urges the Foreign Minister of the Doumergue Cabinet not to compromise the efforts of the British Cabinet by precipitate decisions.

“The points of view of London, Rome, and Berlin have moved much closer together during these last weeks,” says the ambassador, “and His Majesty’s government is not far from thinking that the conclusion of a general Convention may soon be envisaged.”

M. Barthou replies that he appreciates at their true value the attempts made by the English government to safeguard peace. “The threat of German rearmament,” he adds, “makes negotiations more necessary than ever.

[Retained footnotes]

1. Cf. the verbal note handed to Sir Eric Phipps, British ambassador in Berlin, by M. von Neurath and communicated to M. François-Poncet, French ambassador, on April 11, 1934.

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But France will be able to subscribe to a general Convention only if it includes guarantees of execution.”

Lord Tyrrell hastens to send this answer to his government. The cordiality of the tone in which the interview was conducted, joined to the demand for “guarantees of execution,” can, at a pinch, be interpreted as a relaxation of the French position.

On March 28 the British government officially asks the Quai d’Orsay “what would be the exact nature of the guarantees of execution capable of satisfying the French government.” It insists on the urgency of a precise answer, “for,” it says, “a rapid agreement, resting on close collaboration between London and Paris, is greatly desired.”

But on April 6, M. Barthou, asked to furnish the desired clarifications, evades the request and replies in evasive terms:

“The Government of the Republic,” he writes, “would be happy to be able to give the answer requested by His Majesty’s Government, if it did not have the deep feeling that such a solution would commit it to principles different from those to which it intends to remain faithful, as long as the Conference associates itself with its will and its hope of signing a Convention conforming to Article 8 of the Covenant and to Part V of the Treaty. The General Commission alone could say whether the principles that have guided its work until now must be abandoned... If they were freed from the legal obligations that they have subscribed, the Powers would take into consideration, in determining their course, only

their direct interests.

“At the point at which the conversations undertaken now stand, the Government of the Republic cannot reply that it accepts the Memorandum of the United Kingdom of January 29, with the modifications that followed it, as the basis of a Convention into which new guarantees of execution would enter. This adherence, too general not to be equivocal, would not take account of too many questions of the technical order and of the juridical order, which are still pending and which it is not enough to raise in order to regard them as resolved.

“Thus the Government of the Republic will shortly send the ambassador the clarifications he has requested on the French conception of ‘guarantees of execution.’”

Four days later, having still received nothing, the British government renews its request in courteous but pressing form:

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“1. Assuming that it proves possible to reach agreement on the guarantees of execution,” writes Sir John Simon to M. Corbin, French ambassador in London, “would the French Government be ready to accept as the basis of the projected Convention the Memorandum of the United Kingdom of January 29, as it has been modified in accordance with the proposals made by Chancellor Hitler to M. Eden and communicated by the latter to the French Government on March 1? It may be that these latter proposals can undergo certain modifications, but for the moment it is appropriate to suppose that they remain as M. Eden formulated them.

“2. If the answer to the first question is affirmative, what is the exact nature of the guarantees of execution that the French Government proposes?

“His Majesty’s Government notes that the French Government proposes to supply, within a very short time, clarifications on the French conception of guarantees of execution, and I was happy to learn from you yesterday that we could expect to receive the French note within a few days.”

On April 16 the Reich sends the English Government a Memorandum in which it sets down in writing the verbal proposals made to M. Eden during his visit to Berlin:

“The Reich Government,” this note declares, “cannot wait two years before ensuring its air security by the means it considers appropriate for this purpose. It desires to possess, as soon as the Convention enters into force, a defensive air fleet, composed of aircraft with limited radius of action and including no bombing aircraft. The strength of this air fleet will not exceed 50% of the French metropolitan and colonial air forces, or 33% of the total air fleets of the Powers bordering Germany, choosing whichever of the two figures is the lower.

“The Reich Government is prepared to enact measures establishing the non-military character of the S.A. and the S.S. and to have their application supervised by a Control Commission. These measures are the following:

“1. The S.A. will possess no weapons.

- “2. They will not be trained in the handling of weapons.
- “3. They will neither be assembled nor trained in military camps.
- “4. They will be trained neither directly nor indirectly by officers of the regular army.

[Retained footnotes]

1. Letter addressed by Sir John Simon, British Under-Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, to M. Corbin, French ambassador in London, on April 10, 1934.

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“5. The execution of field exercises, and even simple participation in the said exercises, will be forbidden to them.

“The German Government willingly agrees that the disarmament of the other Powers shall begin only after the expiration of the first five years of the Convention. The Reich Government accepts all the other stipulations of the British Memorandum, including the institution of control.”

The next day, April 17, M. Barthou replies to the English note of the 10th. This reply, which Lord Lothian called “a no of fatal historical scope,” and M. Viénot “a blunt refusal and a blow with a cudgel,” is a formal refusal to continue the talks. Neglecting to answer the questions put by the British Cabinet, M. Barthou declares “that the French government solemnly refuses to legalize German rearmament, that this has made all negotiations useless, and that France will henceforth ensure her security by her own means.”

“Whereas eleven days earlier German rearmament caused the English proposal to be welcomed with gratitude,” writes M. Jean Viénot on April 17, “this same rearmament has rendered all negotiations vain... The reason invoked is manifestly inadmissible, since eleven days earlier it served to justify an opposite eagerness. In a word, the will to break is evident.

“The historians of the future,” M. Viénot continues, “will treat the period comprised between the signing of the Treaty of Versailles and the spring of 1934 in a single great chapter that they will entitle: ‘The Hesitations of France.’ For fifteen years, in fact, France seeks to win on both boards of the international game: the board of armed peace and the board of organized peace... At no moment does she choose. At no moment does she understand that one must choose, and that the day will come, in particular, when it will be impossible to enclose Germany in the network of international obligations woven at Geneva, if one claims to preserve at the same time, by superiority of armaments, the means of disengaging oneself from it without risk... On April 17 France chose armed peace.”

It is not a question of blaming M. Barthou for having chosen, nor

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even for having preferred security of her own to a general agreement. What is baffling is that he chose his moment so badly for taking so grave a decision. To abandon a method when one realizes that it

gives no result is perfectly legitimate. But to abandon it after fifteen years of efforts, on the eve of the day when it may perhaps bear fruit, is very easily to give the impression that one does not want, that one never wanted, a general agreement. It might pass, if one had something else to put in its place. But the note of April 17 leaves the problem entire. It brings no remedy to the evil and does not even contain the sketch of a solution. To say that "France will ensure her security by her own means" has meaning only if one is determined to send, within forty-eight hours, three million men onto the left bank of the Rhine. Now such an operation is possible only with England's support — the very England that M. Barthou has just treated so cavalierly.

From this point of view, M. Barthou's attitude is so unreasonable that one seeks to find mitigating circumstances for it. M. Viénot, for his part, claims that the note of April 17 was imposed on him by M. Doumergue. He sees proof of this in the fact that "six weeks later, at Geneva, M. Barthou, frightened by the responsibility that M. Doumergue had made him take, returned theoretically to the conception of organized peace." This is possible. But it is not certain, and, the two men being dead, it is impossible to question them.

Perhaps other elements came at the last minute to confirm M. Barthou in the soundness of his thesis. It is known that after his death, Schleicher was accused of having prevented the conclusion of an agreement on disarmament by confirming to an ambassador of a foreign Power that Hitler's fall was imminent and that he must not be treated with at any price. Did this information, transmitted to the Quai d'Orsay, induce M. Barthou to break off the talks under any pretext, simply to gain time, with the intention of resuming them later, when Hitler had disappeared? It is not impossible...

It would doubtless be false to say that the note of April 17 permitted German rearmament, for this had already been begun for some time. But this note opened wide a door hitherto ajar. Instead of a rearmament controlled and contained within the limits of a collective Convention,

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it gave the Reich full latitude to arm, no longer up to a level accepted on both sides, but up to the extreme limit of its forces.

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VIII

GERMANY LAYS THE FOUNDATIONS OF THE NATIONAL ARMY

"It is in time of peace that cannon must be forged," Bismarck never ceased to repeat, and Hitler did not wait until April 17, 1934, to make this axiom of the Iron Chancellor his own. Since the time when, as a very young man, he contemplated the illustrated albums of the war of 1870, he had never ceased proclaiming his admiration for military ethics. From his entry into the political arena, he declared that his first concern, once he had come to power, would be to "replace the troop of mercenaries with a national army," and in *Mein Kampf* he expounded at length the place he would assign to the Wehrmacht within the Third Reich.

To it must fall a pre-eminent role: internally, to defend the national territory and to serve to perfect the

civic education of every German, who will receive, at the expiration of his time of service, a certificate of physical aptitude and a citizen's diploma; externally, to secure for the Germanic race the "living space" that it needs in order to grow and prosper. As in the old Germanic tribes, where the adolescent was admitted to the deliberations of the Thing only after having received the investiture of arms, it is only after having been a soldier that the German of the Third Reich will be a full member of the national community.

Thus one must not be surprised if, from January 1933, Hitler lays before Marshal Hindenburg a Four-Year Plan intended to absorb unemployment by a set of measures in which the development of the armaments industry holds a considerable place, and if, shortly afterward, he states to General von Blomberg "that the essential task of the new government will consist in strengthening the Army and the Party in parallel." These projects merely confirm all his previous declarations.

[Retained footnotes]

1. The 22nd point of the National Socialist program, published February 24, 1920. (See vol. II, p. 249.)

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To tell the truth, on arriving in power, the head of the National Socialist Movement already finds part of the work accomplished: it is that carried out by the General Staff of the Reichswehr between 1924 and 1930. The prototypes are built, the workshops reorganized, the manufacturing files prepared for some factories. But to these fragmentary and still scattered efforts Hitler is going to give an unprecedented impulse. On his order all the machines will start moving and will work at a faster and faster pace. A sort of frenzy will seize German industry; in a few years nearly 70% of the enterprises will be monopolized by war production.

It matters little if so much haste is prejudicial to the quality of the materiel. The essential thing is to act quickly, for between the moment when German rearmament becomes official and the one when the new army is completely equipped, there exists a "danger zone," that is, a period when Germany will be at the mercy of a preventive war. The task is therefore to cross this zone as quickly as possible. There will be full latitude afterward to correct errors of detail and to replace defective machines with more satisfactory models.

Accelerated rearmament thus becomes, together with the unification of the Reich and the battle for equality of rights, one of the three points on which the National Socialist government concentrates its efforts.

* * *

The first sign of this redoubling of activity is supplied to us by the increase in imports of raw materials. From 1924 to 1930 Germany scattered her factories in Holland and Sweden, in Denmark and Russia. Now she concentrates on her own territory her dispersed energies and pumps through a thousand channels all the substances necessary for her manufactures.

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Imports of iron ore, scrap iron, and scrap used for the manufacture of Siemens-Martin steel, the only steel used in the armaments industry, stationary until 1931, show, beginning in 1932, a constant progression:

Excess of imports over exports, in tons:

	1932	1933	1934
Iron ore	+3,431,400	+4,527,500	+8,183,300
Scrap iron and scrap	- 194,000	+ 161,200	+ 404,200

In correlation with iron imports, steel production, which had fallen greatly since 1929, rises again and tends to rejoin the indices of the years of prosperity:

Steel production, in millions of tons:

1929	1932	1933	1934	1935
16.9	5.8	7.6	11.9	15.7

The figures corresponding to imports of chromed nickel and tungsten entering into the composition of hard steels (gun metal, shells, armor plates, etc.) are still more striking:

[Retained footnotes]

1. Figures cited by Europe nouvelle, special issue of May 18, 1935, p. 464.
2. This figure will reach 9,611,900 tons in 1936. (Cf. General Azan, La Frénésie des armements allemands, Le Journal, issue of September 17, 1936.)
4. This figure, cited by M. Archimbaud in his Report on the military budget for the fiscal year 1936, Imprimerie de la Chambre des députés, 1935, no. 5592, does not yet quite reach that of 1929. But in 1929 Germany exported her steel throughout the world. In 1935 she consumes it almost entirely on the spot.

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Excess of imports over exports, in tons:

	1932	1933	1934
Nickel ore	+17,700	+34,500	+37,600
Metallic nickel	- 600	+2,000	+4,100
Chrome ore	+42,200	+47,500	+76,400
Tungsten ore	+1,600	+3,650	+4,300

We find a similar progression in imports of bauxite, or aluminum ore, indispensable to aviation, whose monthly average rises from 550 tons in 1932 to 5,500 tons in 1933. For this same product, the excess of imports over exports, which remains around 20,000 tons in 1931 and 1932, rises to 293,100 tons in 1933, to 326,000 tons in 1934, and finally reaches 318,000 tons for the first half of 1936.

Likewise, the import of cellulose, used for the manufacture of newsprint, but also for that of explosives, shows a significant increase. About 1,100,000 quintals per month during the first five months of 1933, it suddenly rises to 3,246,024 quintals in June, to 3,309,399 quintals in July, and to 3,213,841 quintals in August 1933. The same increases are seen with respect to coal tars (14,622 tons imported during the first six months of 1933 and 41,000 tons in 1934), sulfuric acid and pyrites (whose imports show respectively an increase of 6,000 and 140,000 tons during the first seven months of 1933). Finally, one cannot pass over in silence the massive imports of cotton, wool, and hides related to clothing and equipment manufacture, as well as

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the entries of gasoline, indispensable to the motorization of the army.

Parallel to this rise in the index of imported products, the steelworks and forges increase their personnel: 500 workers are hired during the first quarter of 1933 at Rheinmetall (Düsseldorf), where heavy and light cannon, machine guns, and accompanying howitzers are manufactured; 6,000 at Krupp (in Essen), where field guns, naval guns, and fortress howitzers are made.

The labor force of the Mauser rifle factory at Oberndorf rises, at the beginning of 1933, from 800 to 1,300 workers. At Berliner Karlsruher Industrie Werke, personnel increases by 35% during the first half of 1933. 400 workers are hired during the same period at Bochumer Verein. At the Rheinsdorf powder factory, the number of workers rises from 2,000 to 5,200, and the same is true in the chemical plants of Oppau, at Zeiss, at Siemens, at Bayerische Motorwerke, etc.

Alongside the products that she imports from abroad and that impose heavy sacrifices on her finances, Germany concerns herself with developing her own resources. In one year abandoned iron mines are put back into operation, oil wells are drilled, soybean and other oilseed crops are undertaken. An entire new industry, devoted to the search for substitute products (synthetic textiles, fuels, rubber, etc.), develops feverishly. Profiting from the experiences gathered during the blockade of 1914, Germany wants to be able to suffice for herself in case of conflict. "Moreover," writes Europe nouvelle, "industrial mobilization is placed in very favorable conditions as a result of the very structure of the German economy. Industrial power, extreme centralization of the means of production,

[Retained footnotes]

1. In 1935, the monthly capacity of Rheinmetall is raised to 200 cannon; that of Krupp to about 90 heavy-artillery gun tubes, while awaiting the push of their production to the maximum. (General Azan, *Le Journal*, issue of September 17, 1936.) In 1935, the total number of workers employed at Krupp rises to 80,000. (Cf. Léon Archimbaud, Report on the military budget for the fiscal year 1936, p. 16.)

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the Reich's grip on industry, progress accomplished by autarky: all the conditions are of a nature to facilitate to a very great degree the passage from a peacetime economy to that of wartime."

Still more, the boundaries between the peacetime economy and the war economy are gradually effaced. It is no longer a question, at present, of negotiating with certain private groupings in order to obtain their "collaboration" with the military authorities, but of placing the whole of industry at the service of national defense. "The industrial strength and the military strength of a country," one reads in the *Militärwochenblatt* of April 4, 1935, "are twin factors, and the best guarantee of the power of the war economy is the prosperity of the peacetime economy." All this work of research and coordination, entrusted first to Dr. Schacht, then, beginning in 1935, to General Goering, will take on a much greater extension still after the establishment of the second Four-Year Plan in the spring of 1937.

"In sum," concludes *Europe nouvelle*, "resting on the second industry in the world, not hesitating to devote very high sums to indispensable imports, carrying out a policy of ersatz products in all the branches where she is deficient, Germany is preparing to function, on the desired day, as a closed vessel."

[Retained footnotes]

4. It is impossible to fix precisely the sums spent by Germany on her rearmament, since the Reich no longer publishes its military budget after 1934, and the estimates supplied elsewhere vary from single to triple. It would be imprudent, under these conditions, to venture into a domain where the data offer no guarantee of exactitude.

5. It would be wrong to regard the application of this system as an exclusively modern phenomenon. Frederick II already had recourse to similar measures during the Seven Years' War. The Superior Directorate of War, Finance, and Domains, created at that time, concentrated in the hands of the king all the military, financial, and agricultural resources of the country. This Directorate erected customs barriers, restricted the import of cereals, and forbade the export of wool, necessary for making uniforms. Prussian industry received the monopoly of military supplies in exchange for a tax collected by agents of the royal treasury. All the energies of the kingdom were stretched toward a single goal: the provisioning and maintenance of the army. (Cf. Eberhard Kessel, *The Prussian Army from 1640 to 1866*, in Karl Linnebach, *Deutsche Heeresgeschichte*.)

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While these transformations are being accomplished in the domain of industry, work no less important is taking place inside the Reichswehr. On February 1, 1934, General von Fritsch is appointed chief of the Heeresleitung, replacing General von Hammerstein, a trusted man of General von Schleicher and notoriously opposed to National Socialist conceptions.

It was thought, to tell the truth, that the new commander in chief would be General von Reichenau, the former Chief of Staff of General von Blomberg, well known for his sympathies toward the Hitlerian movement. The appointment of General von Fritsch, a soldier of great ability but of absolute political independence, proves that the Reichswehr intends to remain faithful — at least until further notice — to the principle of neutrality that it has followed since 1920.

General von Fritsch, upon whom the task of organizing the new national army is going to fall, is one of von Seeckt's most gifted disciples, and his career has often brought him into contact either with the creator of the professional Reichswehr or with his immediate entourage.

During the war of 1914-1918, the artillery captain von Fritsch worked at the Great General Staff under Colonel Bauer, Ludendorff's right arm. In the autumn of 1919, we find him again in East Prussia, where he is Chief of Staff of the VI Reserve Army Corps, which supplies von der Goltz with the nucleus of the troops with which he undertakes his offensive against Riga. When von der Goltz resigns his functions in order to collaborate "in a private capacity" with Bermond-Avalov, Fritsch passes under the orders of General Eberhardt, charged with proceeding to the evacuation of the Baltic troops in liaison with the officers of the Allied mission.

[Retained footnotes]

1. General von Hammerstein, chief of the Heeresleitung, General Adam, chief of the Truppenamt, and Colonel von Bredow, chief of the Ministerialamt, who all three occupied "key positions" at the Ministry of the Reichswehr, were considered the principal members of what has been called the "Schleicher junta."
2. It is he who is said to have converted General von Blomberg to National Socialism. After June 30, 1934, he will succeed Colonel von Bredow and will ensure liaison between the Reichswehr Minister and the Wehrpolitischesamt of the National Socialist Party.
3. We have had occasion to speak of Colonel Bauer several times, notably during the Kapp Putsch. (See vol. II, p. 83, note 2.)

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He is then in contact with General Niessel, whose task he strives by every means to thwart, and who has drawn for us a picturesque and biting portrait of him.

In 1924 Fritsch becomes Chief of Staff of Wehrkreis I (Königsberg) under General Heye, who will succeed General von Seeckt in 1926. From 1925 to 1930 he works at the Truppenamt, and after a brief passage through Wehrkreis II (Stettin), where he holds the functions of director of artillery, we find him, at the end of 1931, commanding the 1st Cavalry Division at Frankfurt an der Oder, specially charged with the defense of the Polish frontier.

In June 1932 he commands the troops of Wehrkreis III (Berlin), where General von Rundstedt charges him with the technical execution of the state of exception promulgated by Marshal Hindenburg as a result of the conflict setting M. von Papen against the Prussian government. This is the post he occupies in 1934 when he is appointed chief of the Heeresleitung.

Deeply imbued with the methods and spirit of General von Seeckt, having accomplished a large part of his career in the eastern provinces (East Prussia and Silesia), General von Fritsch will henceforth devote himself to the transformation of the professional Reichswehr into a national army.

From his installation at the head of the Heeresleitung, the new commander in chief surrounds himself

with a constellation of young generals whose organizing talent he appreciates: Generals Beck, von Wietersheim, Fromm, Liese, Heinrici, and von Schwedler.

With the exception of General Beck, these officers are little known abroad and their names are only rarely cited in the newspapers. However, the work they accomplished at the head of the different services of the German General Staff is considerable, despite the silence with which they deliberately surrounded it.

On March 22, 1934, the Reich government establishes its military budget for the year 1934-1935. This includes

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the sums necessary for the transformation of the professional Reichswehr into an army of short-term militias. But long before this date — that is, on the day after the elections of March 5 — the barracks and camps had begun to fill. At Zossen, at Döberitz, at Ohrdruf, and elsewhere too, one sees young recruits drilling who are destined to swell the number of instructor corporals. The effectives tables annexed to the Treaty of Versailles are widely exceeded. Without speaking of early releases, the number of volunteers under arms rises to 140,000, then to 165,000 between May and November 1933. Finally, on October 1, 1934, the Reichswehr will incorporate for the first time a large quantity of volunteers engaged for one year. General von Seeckt's "hollow" divisions swell and are transformed into "full" divisions.

From March 1933, the black-red-gold cockade in republican colors is replaced by the black-white-red cockade. On May 12, a law restores the military tribunals abolished by the Weimar Assembly. Finally, after the plebiscite of December 12, the local contingents or Landesmannschaften disappear, as do the Councils of trusted men, the last vestige of the law of March 6, 1919.

Simultaneously, one sees the future air force come into being under the impulse of Goering and his collaborators — General Milch, General Kesselring, Colonel Bruch, Colonel Udet, etc. In May 1935, the Reich Commissariat for Aeronautics is transformed into a ministry. The first models of military aircraft make their appearance in the sky. These are the Junkers 52 heavy bombing aircraft, the Heinkel 70 light bombing aircraft, the Dornier 22 three-seat maritime reconnaissance aircraft, and finally the Arado 65 fighter and observation aircraft, replaced a little later by the Heinkel 61 and the Messerschmitt.

[Retained footnotes]

1. "The Reichswehr," writes General Debeney in November 1933, "seems to have realized this year an excess of about 40,000 men. Until now the infantry regiments counted 3 battalions, plus a fourth of small strength. An increase in effectives has made it possible to constitute 4 identical battalions." (*Le Réarmement allemand*, p. 15.)

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At the same time, Admiral Raeder and the services of the Naval General Staff increase and renovate the units of the fleet. A 10,000-ton battleship (the Graf Spee), two others of 24,000 tons (the Scharnhorst and the Bismarck), a 6,000-ton cruiser, four torpedo boats, and eleven submarines are laid down.

Finally, on May 25, 1934, Marshal Hindenburg and General von Blomberg publish an ordinance concerning the Duties of the German Soldier. It is not without interest to compare it with the similar regulations that preceded it.

The ordinance of 1919 specified: The soldier must have no political activity. That of May 9, 1930, said: The Reichswehr serves the State but not the Parties. That of May 25, 1934, declares: Military service is a service of honor toward the German people.

These three formulas summarize in a striking shortcut the three stages of German military evolution since the war. The first corresponds to the provisional Reichswehr. It reflects the time when the principal concern of the High Command was to ensure the homogeneity of the troop and to keep political disputes out of the barracks. The second symbolizes the professional Reichswehr and its will to identify itself with the State while remaining apart from partisan quarrels. The third bears the imprint of National Socialism: it inaugurates the reconciliation of the army and the nation.

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“An army is going to die; another army is going to be born,” we wrote at the time of the liquidation of the provisional Reichswehr. We could take up this image a second time. As in 1921, the physiognomy and structure of the army are being modified. No doubt the juridical framework of the Reichswehr is still maintained, and the law of March 23, 1921, is still in force. However, one is already fully in the transitional regime. The army of 1933-1934 is no longer von Seeckt's Reichswehr, without yet being the national Wehrmacht.

Moreover, before this evolution is entirely accomplished, Germany will have to pass through a dreadful crisis.

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A storm is preparing, whose alarming signs pile up on all sides. An anguished atmosphere weighs on the Reich and announces, once more, the imminence of a conflict.

It will be the last convulsion of these fifteen terrible years. But it will also be the most tragic.

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IX

THE NIGHT OF THE LONG KNIVES (30 June 1934)

While the Reichswehr General Staff draws up the plans for the future national army and the volunteers stream toward the barracks and training camps, the brown army has not ceased to progress under the

impulse of Röhm and his collaborators. Not only has it absorbed all that remained of the old national formations, but it has incorporated the greater part of the Stahlhelm volunteers. In all regions of the Reich, sons of peasants ruined by the agricultural crisis, unemployed workers, employees, and small shopkeepers come every day by the thousand to enlist in its ranks. Strong with 400,000 men at the seizure of power, it counts more than 3 million members in the spring of 1934.

This swelling of effectives has brought about important modifications in its structure. The Untergruppen have been suppressed and replaced by brigades. The Gruppen, or divisions, have been maintained. But superimposed on them now are seven Obergruppen, or army corps, which represent the highest echelon of the hierarchy.

The creation of the Obergruppen and the almost daily formation of supplementary units have necessitated a considerable widening of the cadres and staffs. Now, in the general intoxication that followed the seizure of power, appointments have not always taken place according to seniority or merit. While many militiamen of the first hour have seen themselves pushed aside, a great number of newcomers have risen by intrigue to the highest posts.

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Young ambitious men, devoid of all scruple, have been promoted in a few months to the rank of divisional general or army corps commander. At the age when, in the regular army, they would at most be company commanders or battalion chiefs, they find themselves at the head of 80,000 or 100,000 men. Is it surprising if this vertiginous ascent, and the exorbitant power they hold, have gone to their heads and given birth in them to insane dreams?

“Contrary to my formal orders,” Hitler will later say in his speech to the Reichstag of July 13, 1934, “and contrary to the explanations provided to me by the Chief of Staff, the S.A. had grown to such a proportion that the homogeneity of this organization could only suffer. The bonds between the brown army and the Party began to loosen. The S.A. gradually departed from the mission for which they had been created and devoted themselves to other tasks, to other interests. Appointments were made only by favor. The conduct of the new leaders, who had not done their apprenticeship in the troop, was revolting. I drew the attention of the Chief of Staff to these facts, without observing the least improvement.”

Quite the contrary. Far from moderating themselves, the S.A. leaders belonging to Röhm’s immediate entourage become intoxicated with their own triumph and organize parades and mass demonstrations solely for the pleasure of being acclaimed by their troops. Thus, from October 3 to 6, 1933, Röhm concentrates in Breslau the whole Silesian division, composed of 5 brigades and 29 regiments, that is, in total, 83,600 men. Most of these units have made marches of several days with their complete equipment, and the parade itself lasts more than four hours. Led by Obergruppenführer Heines, commander of the IIIrd region, the long brown column passes before the Chief of Staff. First come, with flags at their head, a delegation from the Horst Wessel brigade, belonging to the Berlin-Brandenburg division, and the Staff section of the 5th brigade of Stettin (II region); then the cavalry regiment of the Silesian S.A., and finally twenty-nine infantry regiments and one motorized regiment with five groups.

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Such spectacles, frequently renewed, are hardly of a nature to calm the appetite for domination of these young praetorians who, without Röhm, would be vegetating in some obscure office or small provincial garrison. Are they not the masters of an army ten times superior in number to the regular army? Are they not, in fact, the masters of Germany? For them, the conquest of power means that nothing any longer stands in the way of satisfying their desires. Almost all have accounts to settle with their personal enemies; they dream of putting to pillage the fortunes of the banks and private industry, of dividing among themselves the gold of Jewish financiers and the estates of reactionary squires. The first revolution is made; the second must begin, for they refuse to be content with a victory without booty.

Yet as early as July 1, 1933, Hitler warned his lieutenants that it would be dangerous for them to embark on this path.

“I am resolved to repress severely any attempt tending to disturb the present order,” he declares to all the S.A. and S.S. leaders assembled at Bad Reichenhall. “I shall oppose with the utmost energy a second revolutionary wave, for it would end in true chaos. Whoever rises against the authority of the State will be arrested, without regard to his rank or his position in the Party.”

It is in fact true that Hitler’s thoughts are oriented in an entirely different direction. For him, the conquest of power has put a definitive end to the revolutionary phase of National Socialism and has inaugurated the beginning of a constructive period. It is now a matter of giving bread and work to the unemployed, reforming the status of the peasants, creating a national army, and raising the German economy from its ruins, not of accumulating new ruins. For fifteen years Germany has been dragged into a whirlwind of revolutions and crises. To halt this infernal cycle, the regime must be stabilized. Still more: it is necessary to extirpate from the minds of the young the morbid taste they have acquired for putsches and rebellions. “The revolution,” Hitler says on July 6

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1933 in his speech to the Statthalter, “cannot be permanent. Many revolutionary movements have succeeded in conquering power. Rare are those that have succeeded in maintaining themselves there. The time has now come to canalize the torrent of revolution into the calmer bed of constructive evolution.”

On July 11, 1933, M. Frick, Minister of the Interior, publishes the following decree, which seems to echo these declarations:

“The victorious German revolution has entered the phase of evolution. To speak of continuing the revolution, or even of making a second one, would be to compromise the legal and constructive evolution desired by the Führer. Such words constitute rebellion against the Führer, sabotage of the national revolution, and a factor of disturbance for the German economy that the government is successfully reconstructing. Every attempt at sabotage of the revolution, and in particular arbitrary interventions in the economy, will be severely repressed. The National Socialist organizations and groupings have no right to arrogate to themselves powers that belong exclusively to the head of the

government.”

The next day, commenting on this decree before the S.A. commanders, Hitler strives to make them understand that revolution is only a means of attaining power, not an end in itself. In every surgical operation, a moment comes when it is necessary to sew up, under penalty of killing the patient one intends to heal.

“It is necessary to realize the synthesis between the ideal of National Socialism and the demands of economic reality,” he continues. “I shall strive to realize a work that withstands the criticisms of posterity. In everything I do, I never capitulate except before reason...”

But many leaders do not understand this language. They are not statesmen, but militants. They threw themselves headlong into the National Socialist Movement as into an exciting adventure, and they cannot resign themselves to believing that this adventure is over. They were launched with violence in the assault on the State; they were galvanized by fanatical speeches; their energy was compressed for years, and this energy, not satisfied by the seizure of power, demands new objectives, new satisfactions. Thus some of them interpret Hitler’s words as a renunciation of the ideal

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for which they fought. They have remained the same; it is Hitler who has changed! They think sadly that if the Führer speaks to them thus, it is because he is under the influence of the powers of money and reactionary circles. Fortunately they are there, weapon at the foot, to see to it that the revolution does not bog down in immobility!

“He who imagines that the task of the Assault Sections is finished,” cries Röhm on August 6 before eighty-two thousand S.A. assembled at Tempelhof, “forgets that we are here and that we shall remain here, whatever happens!”

A few days later, before the leaders of the S.A. and the Stahlhelm assembled at Godesberg, he takes up the same theme again, but this time mingling it with a shade of threat:

“Under no pretext will I tolerate the Assault Sections’ departing from the goal assigned to them. We will see to it that the ‘political soldier’ preserves the rights for whose acquisition he fought so valiantly.”

Brawls break out between the S.A. and the police, so that Goering is forced to disband the auxiliary formations of the Hilfspolizei, constituted the day after the seizure of power. This is the divorce between the brown shirts and the State police. On August 25, a decree stipulates that only members of the assault troops having at least the rank of platoon leader (Scharführer) will have the right to carry weapons. On receipt of this order, several sections mutiny and must be dissolved.

However, Hitler refuses to believe that this effervescence is anything other than a sporadic fever attack. He thinks that the best way of calming the discontent of the S.A. is to prove to them that they form an integral part of the State and that any attempt to overturn that State would amount for them to a true suicide. By the law of December 1, 1933, he proclaims the unity of Party and State, and, in order to mark clearly the place belonging to the S.A. in the Third Reich, he raises Röhm to the dignity of Reich

Minister.

But while accepting these functions, Röhm refuses to let himself be “absorbed.”

“I shall continue to reside in Munich,” he declares in an arrogant tone. “Nothing will be changed in my Staff. The S.A. will continue to call me Chief of Staff.”

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Röhm’s presence in the Cabinet Councils is, however, going to bring grave consequences; for a violent disagreement soon sets him against General von Blomberg, Minister of the Reichswehr.

This conflict, to tell the truth, was inevitable. During recent months the S.A. has incorporated all the national formations. By this fact, the brown army and the Reichswehr are no longer separated by anything and confront each other in an atmosphere of reciprocal mistrust. If Röhm and Blomberg clash within the Cabinet, it is because their antagonism prolongs that of the two groups they command.

The turn taken by the Geneva negotiations, Germany’s withdrawal from the League of Nations, the scale assumed by rearmament — everything suggests that the Reich is moving toward a national army and that decisions in this direction will soon be taken. But this army, who will command it? What will it be made of? These capital questions still remain in suspense. Moreover, the negotiations with the Allies are not yet broken off, and for the moment there is talk only of an army of three hundred thousand men.

On February 21, 1934, M. Eden arrives in Berlin. During the conversations he has with the Lord Privy Seal, Hitler, as we have seen, accepts the promulgation of a certain number of measures guaranteeing the non-military character of the S.A. and S.S. On April 16, M. von Neurath renews these proposals in writing, in a note addressed to the British Government.

As could be expected, these measures, badly interpreted, sharply displease Röhm. He believes that Hitler wants to sacrifice to the necessities of his foreign policy the army that he has spent seven years organizing and that has only one step left to take in order to become the new national army. He insists on making a declaration to the representatives of the foreign press in Berlin. Goebbels tries in vain to dissuade him.

“The revolution that we have made,” declares Röhm on April 18, “is not a national revolution, but a National Socialist revolution. We even insist on emphasizing this latter word: socialist. The only rampart that exists against reaction is represented by our Assault Sections, for they are the total incarnation of the revolutionary idea. The militant in the brown shirt has entered from the first day on the path of revolution, and he will not deviate from it by the sole of a shoe

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until our last objective is reached.”

Echoing the Chief of Staff, Heines, commander of the Silesian division and one of the most powerful S.A. generals after Röhm, states during a parade at Altheide (Silesia):

“We have sworn to remain revolutionaries... We are only at the beginning... We will rest only when the German revolution is completed.”

As for Ernst, commander of the Berlin-Brandenburg division, he utters the following threatening words the next day:

“The German people was awakened by the marching step of the S.A. columns. Twelve years of struggle have given us victory. We will know how to prevent Germany from falling asleep again!”

On April 17, M. Barthou had cut short the Anglo-German negotiations. Sensing that the army problem will be posed very shortly, Röhm sets out his wishes during a Cabinet meeting. As early as 1920, he says, Hitler proclaimed, in Article 22 of the program of the N.S.D.A.P.: “We demand the suppression of the mercenary corps and its replacement by a national army.” In 1923, he wrote in *Mein Kampf* that the S.A. should form the embryo of the future army. Now Germany is going to begin openly rearming, and hundreds of thousands of men are going to be called under the flags. The moment has therefore come to incorporate the S.A. into the Reichswehr en masse. The *Stürme* will become battalions, the *Standarten* regiments, every leader preserving the rank he holds in the brown army. Brigade and division commanders will be maintained at the rank of general. Röhm, for his part, asks for the post of Chief of the General Staff, or, failing that, the command in chief, the Ministry of the Reichswehr.

But General von Blomberg rebels against these pretensions.

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The brown army is at most an army of civil war. It would be incapable of successfully sustaining a foreign war. The Reichswehr will never enlist S.A. units in bloc and will not recognize either the ranks obtained in the Assault Sections. Anyone who wants to enter the army must come to it individually and begin at the lowest rung of the hierarchy.

“To act otherwise,” declares the Minister of the Reichswehr, “would be to break completely the unity of the army. This is a responsibility that I refuse to take.”

In this stormy debate, Hitler sides with Blomberg. “To place the chief of the S.A. at the head of the army,” he will say later, “would have been to disavow the political conceptions that I had followed for more than fourteen years. Even in 1923, I proposed, to command the army, a former officer (Ludendorff) and not the man who then commanded the Assault Sections (Goering). I was bound not only by the promise I had made to the President of the Reich to keep the army apart from politics, but also by my personal convictions. In addition, it would have been humanly impossible for me to commit so disloyal an action toward the Reich Minister of War, who had devoted himself with all his heart to reconciling the army with yesterday’s revolutionaries and today’s government. There is in the State only one armed force: the Reichswehr, and only one agent of political power: the National Socialist Party.”

Besides, how could Hitler hesitate between the clique of adventurers gravitating around Röhm and the constellation of generals surrounding Blomberg? How could he sacrifice the Reichswehr, in which several centuries of military traditions are perpetuated, to an instrument he himself forged in a few years, for an exclusive purpose of propaganda and domestic politics?

Such demands astonish him coming from Röhm, for they testify to an absolute misunderstanding of the respective functions of the army and the S.A. The Reichswehr is, and must remain, an apolitical organ. The S.A., on the other hand, is essentially political. The one is at the service of the nation, whose territory it defends. The other is the instrument of the Party, whose ideas it propagates. They form the two

[Retained footnotes]

1. Speech delivered in the Reichstag on July 13, 1934.

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columns on which the Third Reich rests. To unite them, or even to confuse them, would be to provoke the collapse of the edifice. There is no more question of incorporating the Assault Sections en masse into the army than of dissolving the S.A. for the benefit of the Reichswehr.

The echo of these dissensions has reached the ears of military circles. They are all the more affected by it because Marshal Hindenburg's health is declining. It will soon be necessary to think of giving him a successor, a question all the more grave because the President of the Reich is the Supreme Chief of the army. Now, as long as the conflict with the S.A. is not resolved, the Reichswehr judges it more prudent to keep its distance.

Recent events even lead it to strengthen its vigilance. It allowed National Socialism to come to power. It even consented to participate in the festivities of May 1. But it will go no further as long as it feels this sword of Damocles suspended above its head. During a meeting held at Bad Nauheim under the presidency of General von Fritsch, the generals examine the situation and decide not to tolerate at any price the army's being subjected to the influence of the Parties. No doubt they recall the precept of von Seeckt, which seems to have been written in anticipation of the present crisis:

"It happens that a Party leader finds himself raised to the head of the State. But this situation presents a grave danger, for this man may be incapable of harmonizing and coordinating all the forces of the nation, so that a Party leader finds himself where a head of State should be. Perhaps an exceptionally gifted temperament will be able to accomplish in himself the necessary transformation. But he will meet on the way with legitimate suspicions.

"Every great human mission requires sacrifices. A people, too, requires sacrifices from its leader. Personal feelings must play no role with regard to the reason of State of which he is the living incarnation, and his will must be submitted only to this single maxim:

Salus rei publicae summa lex."

[Retained footnotes]

1. "The supreme law is the safety of the Commonwealth." (General von Seeckt,

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"The complaints against the S.A. multiplied during the months of April and May," declares Hitler. "The Chief of Staff sought to deny the reality of the facts and treated these grievances as pure calumnies against the Assault Sections. Discontent was growing within the Party. The S.A. was isolating itself more and more.

"Following these incidents, very lively discussions took place between the Chief of Staff and me, during which, for the first time, doubts arose in my mind concerning this man's loyalty.

"From the month of May onward, no doubt was any longer possible: Röhm cherished projects whose realization would have provoked the gravest disturbances. But I could not accustom myself to the idea that relations I believed to be based on the most absolute fidelity rested on a lie. Moreover, I still hoped to spare the Movement and my S.A. the shame of a public conflict. I still thought I could avert the danger without needing to resort to harsh methods."

But the divergences only grow sharper between Hitler and Röhm. Pushed out of the police by Goering, kept away from the army by Blomberg, Röhm feels the ground shrinking around him. While his rivals are solidly established in official positions and live, loaded with honors, in sumptuous palaces, he feels himself kept on the margin of events and sees his career end in a dead end. Minister without portfolio, Chief of Staff of the S.A., and Bolivian lieutenant colonel, he is still, for the generals of the Reichswehr, only a simple retired captain. Suspect to most of the members of the Cabinet, constantly denounced for his corrupt morals, this maker of coups d'état and pronunciamientos finds himself more and more out of place in a regime where the forces of order are visibly strengthening. As always, his anarchic character rebels. Has he ever accepted the yoke of any law? As far as he can remember, he always sees himself in rebellion against the established authorities. He left the army in 1921 and, until 1923, hoped to drag the army into his revolt. He

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failed in that. He then became the enemy of the Reichswehr and built beside it a powerful personal legion. After his disagreement with Hitler in 1924, he preferred to expatriate himself rather than accept directives contrary to his combative temperament. He then sees himself again in La Paz, in the hot, moist climate of that little South American Republic, where adventurers flow in from all corners of the world — mercenaries and drug traffickers, desperados and arms brokers, some selling their blood to the highest bidder, the others piling up fortunes in gambling dens and ministries. Never did he feel more at ease than in this milieu where life flowed at full tide and was only a succession of skirmishes and brawls. Then he returned to Germany, where, section by section and regiment by regiment, he built a gigantic army of three million men. And now that he is on the point of touching the goal, he should

efface himself to leave room for others? That is impossible! To the end, Röhm will remain what he has always been: a rebel and a conspirator. This law is too deeply inscribed in his blood for him to be able to betray it. That is his greatness, no doubt, but it is also his drama. For this fidelity to his own destiny will end by prevailing over fidelity to his leader.

Moreover, Röhm has no sympathy for the autarkic and hierarchized Reich that Hitler is building, nor for the mystical and “ducal” State, inspired by the Teutonic Order, whose theorist and propagandist Rosenberg has become. He would much prefer a sort of praetorian Republic, an S.A.-State in which the Assault Sections would exercise power directly, a socialist and military Reich, based on the primacy of the “eternal soldier,” and over which the brown shirts would reign like Wallenstein’s landsknechts.

To realize this project, Röhm begins by enlarging the services of his Staff. To the numerous already existing sections — personnel, hygiene, justice, training, etc. — he adds a political service and a press service independent of those of the Party, which transform the S.A. Staff into a true autonomous government.

[Retained footnotes]

1. See above, p. 42.
2. These duplicate the similar organs of the N.S.D.A.P., notably the Wehrpolitisches-Amt and the propaganda services directed by Goebbels.

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Three groups then form among the S.A. commanders. First, a small camarilla gathered around Röhm, comprising the most powerful generals of the brown army and bound together by the community of morals and ambition. Then, a certain number of leaders, not subordinated to this coterie, but who continue to obey Röhm out of a spirit of discipline. Finally, a few leaders pushed out of the High Command who are troubled by Röhm’s projects and have gone over to the opposition, such as Viktor Lutze, the chief of the Hanover S.A., and Himmler, the chief of the S.S.

Even if we knew nothing of Röhm’s character, the men with whom he surrounds himself would suffice to describe him. There are among them former combatants and irreproachable soldiers, but also brutal and depraved individuals. The most prominent members of this latter group are Edmund Heines, general of the Silesian S.A., former member of the Rossbach Free Corps, who took an active part in the struggle against Korfanty; Karl Ernst, general of the Berlin S.A. and successor of Horst Wessel, who participated in the bloody repression of the Rhenish separatists; Peter von Heydebreck, general of the Pomeranian S.A., organizer of the Free Corps of the same name, which fought at the battle of the Klodnitz and then founded racialist gymnastics societies; Hans Hayn, general of the Saxon S.A., one of the protagonists of the Black Reichswehr putsch; Manfred von Killinger, who was mixed up in the Organization Consul trial after the murder of Rathenau, and who was formerly chief of the military bureau of the Ehrhardt Brigade; Konrad Schragmüller, chief of the Magdeburg S.A., former member of the von Yorck Free Corps, who distinguished himself at the battles of Bauske and Thorensberg; August Schneidhuber, general of the Bavarian S.A. and police prefect of Munich, former member of Orgesch and one of the organizers of the Bavarian Einwohnerwehr; Rolf Reiner, chief of the political bureau of the S.A. and aide-de-camp to Röhm, former member of the Reichskriegsflagge during the Munich

Putsch; Gerd, former aviation officer of the Richthofen squadron, front comrade of Goering and decorated, like him, with the order "Pour le Mérite"; von Detten, Uhl, Kopp, and others still...

"As the Chief of Staff did not know exactly to what

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extent I would oppose the realization of his projects," says Hitler, "a first plan was drawn up to force my hand. The psychological atmosphere necessary for the proclamation of the second revolution was methodically prepared. Members of the Assault Sections were told that the Reichswehr had decided to dissolve them and that I personally had been won over to this project. A war chest of 12 million marks was assembled. Finally, special shock troops were created, camouflaged under the name of Staff Guards (Stabswachen). It was declared that my hesitations obliged the S.A. to act on its own initiative, but that I would certainly bow before the accomplished fact."

It is certain that the long impunity they have enjoyed until now makes the S.A. leaders more and more audacious. On the one hand, they incense Röhm and persuade him that he is the "strong man" for whom Germany is waiting and that he would need only make a gesture to supplant Hitler. On the other, they do not hesitate to proclaim that the second revolution is near, that on the day when it breaks out they will settle accounts with all their enemies, and that it will be the beginning of such a carnage as Germany has never yet seen.

Emboldened by the cynical declarations and the bad example of their leaders, small groups of S.A. begin, here and there, to engage in acts of violence. In the last days of May, platoons of brown shirts wreck the Karstadt department stores in Hamburg. The police must intervene to restore order. Scenes of the same kind occur in Frankfurt and Dresden. In Munich, where spirits are overheated, Staff Guards run through the streets singing revolutionary couplets. One of them has for its refrain this significant line:

Sharpen your long knives on the edge of the sidewalk!

At the beginning of June, Hitler makes a final attempt at conciliation. He has with Röhm a five-hour interview that lasts until midnight. The Chief of Staff begins by accusing him, in a bitter tone, of betraying the Party and preparing the dissolution of the S.A. in connivance with the Reichswehr. "I answered him," Hitler will later declare, "that this was absolutely false and that there was no question at all of dissolving

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...the S.A.; but that, on the other hand, I would personally — and immediately — break any attempt capable of plunging Germany back into anarchy, and that anyone who attacked the State must count me in advance among his enemies. I implored him one last time to oppose all this madness himself, in order to avoid a catastrophe."

Röhm came out of this interview deeply disappointed. He understood that he would never win Hitler over to his views. In appearance he bowed before the Führer's admonitions; but he immediately forged

a second plan, which he communicated to the members of his entourage.

A coup de force would soon be unleashed in Berlin. The S.A. would occupy the ministerial buildings by surprise. From the first hour, Hitler would be imprisoned and held incommunicado for forty-eight hours. In this way it would be possible to claim that the rest of the action was being carried out in his name. As for the men charged with arresting him, they would be told that the Führer was secretly in agreement with the planned operation, but that he did not wish to find himself mixed up in the affair, because he was morally a prisoner of the reaction. This plan was immediately adopted by the camarilla. Hayn, in Saxony, and Heines, in Silesia, sounded out the police in order to know how it would react.

Yet Hitler was still reluctant to take sanctions. He feared that the spectacle of internal quarrels within the Party would shake the nation's confidence and that the opposition would take advantage of it to say that he had lost control of his troops. Hoping that tempers would finally calm down, he signed, on 6 June, a decree prescribing a month of leave for all S.A. men, beginning 1 July. During this period they were forbidden to wear the uniform, hold meetings, and take part in demonstrations or parades. By this one-month leave, Hitler thought he could strike a double blow. On the one hand, it would prove to foreign countries that the S.A. was not an army, that it nourished no bellicose design, and that calm reigned in Germany. On the other,

[Retained footnotes]

1. Speech of 13 July 1934.

2. It will be noticed that this discussion exactly reproduces, but in a much more serious form, the one that had taken place in February 1924. On closer examination, one has the impression that Hitler and Röhm never had the same conception of the role of the Assault Sections. The twists and turns of the struggle had masked their divergences. Now that the struggle is over, these divergences burst forth.

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it would demonstrate to the brown shirts that their presence was not indispensable to the life of the country.

The day after next, 8 June, Röhm replied to this decree by having the following communiqué published throughout the press:

The enemies of the S.A. will receive the answer they deserve at the proper time and in the desired form. If our enemies believe that the S.A. will not return from its leave, or will return only in part, they are mistaken. The S.A. are and remain masters of Germany's destiny!

Contrary to usage, this proclamation, which sounds like a challenge, does not end with the ritual Heil Hitler!

Its publication is, moreover, a signal blunder. All at once, the whole of Germany is warned that "something serious" is happening in the Assault Sections. Up to this point, no one had known anything about it, apart from a few insiders. Now that the quarrel has been carried into the public square, everyone awaits the course of events with curiosity, without for all that suspecting the drama that is being prepared.

* * *

Hitler himself does not suspect it either. He believes he has rid himself of an affair that annoys him all the more because his mind is absorbed by entirely different worries.

Following the rapprochement that has taken place, on the margins of the Disarmament Conference, between Paris, London, and Washington on the one hand, and Paris, Warsaw, and Prague on the other, Germany is afraid of finding herself isolated. Wanting to deal with the most urgent matter, Hitler sends Goering to Budapest, where the president of the Prussian Council is received by Regent Horthy. Then he dispatches Goebbels to Warsaw, to give a lecture there on Germany's policy of peace. Finally, on 14 June, he himself takes the airplane for Venice in order to confer there with Mussolini.

The announcement of this interview bursts like a bomb in international circles. All the newspapers of the world telephone Berlin to obtain confirmation of the news before publishing it. Their commentaries reflect their apprehensions.

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The editorial writers denounce the dangers of an Italo-German agreement. But at the same time, they stress the obstacles standing in its way. South Tyrol, Austria, and the Balkans are such important zones of interest for Italy that Mussolini could not renounce them. In short, before Hitler has even arrived at his destination, they predict that he will draw from this journey neither profit nor pleasure.

This prediction is fulfilled: he draws none from it.

He is received at Strà, near the Lido, by a strapped-in, booted, braided, triumphant Mussolini. The Duce, moreover, cruelly abuses his advantages. Everywhere he takes precedence over his guest and relegates him to the background; in Saint Mark's Square, where he harangues the crowd from a balcony of the Procuratie, he pays no more attention to him than if he did not exist.

Hitler, moreover, cuts a poor figure, with his lounge suit, his gray gabardine coat, and his too-tight patent leather shoes, which make him suffer. Absorbed in his thoughts, with an absent and morose air, it is with a mixture of anger and envy that he listens to the head of the Italian government speak, who seems to have victoriously settled all his problems.

Mussolini, for his part, treats Hitler with condescension. He speaks to him with the assurance of a master initiating a novice into the secrets of his profession. He lavishes advice on him, offers himself as an example, and describes the way in which he dismisses members of his entourage from time to time to prevent them from monopolizing public favor. The Duce is manifestly thinking of Grandi, Balbo, Volpi — but the name he pronounces is that of Röhm, and he does not conceal his antipathy “for the behavior and methods of this singular personage.”

Each of these words wounds Hitler deeply. But when he seeks to approach questions of general policy, Mussolini diverts the conversation, as if his power were too poorly assured for it to be worth discussing them with him. When Hitler, ulcerated, takes the airplane back to Berlin, all that he brings back from his journey is this humiliating piece of advice:

“Begin, then, by putting a little order in your own house!”

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This is not an idle remark. The situation he finds on returning to Germany is of a kind to justify the worst apprehensions.

* * *

During his journey to Italy, the handling of current affairs had been entrusted to Vice-Chancellor von Papen. Now he had wanted to take advantage of Hitler's absence to attempt to take the reins of power back into his own hands. He regrets having vouched for the leader of the brown shirts to Hindenburg, and suffers from the reproaches addressed to him on that subject. His closest collaborators — among them talented journalists such as Edgar Jung and Walther Schotte, and high civil servants such as Erich Klausener and Ministerialrat von Bose — urge him to seize the opportunity and evict Hitler before the death of the Marshal. They assure him that his position is solid enough to allow him to speak loudly and firmly. They advise him to present to the people a new government program capable of rallying to him the parties of the right and the Catholic hierarchy.

Jung and Dr. Schotte begin by putting on paper the broad lines of a speech they would like to see delivered by the Vice-Chancellor. Then Bose goes to Neudeck, Hindenburg's country house, to obtain the old Marshal's approval. On 14 June Hitler takes the airplane for Italy. Three days later, von Papen speaks at Marburg.

The date and the place of the demonstration have been admirably chosen. At Fulda, not far from the little university town of Marburg, the conference of the German archbishops has been sitting for several days under the presidency of Cardinal Bertram, primate of Silesia. He has just addressed to his flock a vibrant appeal, begging them “not to listen to the voice of false prophets and not to fall in step with the atheists who, arm outstretched, are engaging in a war to the finish against the Christian faith.” The allusion is clear enough to be understood by all.

Von Papen's speech is a skillful paraphrase of the Cardinal's exhortations. In it he denounces without restraint

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“the fanatics and the chatterers who thoughtlessly speak of unleashing a second revolution.”

“The river of history,” he affirms, “flows according to its own rhythm and has no need at all to be accelerated... Germany must not become a train launched on an adventure, of which no one knows where it will stop... Great men are not created by propaganda, but by the value of their acts and the judgment of history... A deficient or primitive intelligence qualifies no one to enter into a struggle against the spirit...”

“The situation is bad, the laws are imperfect, unjust and arbitrary acts are committed daily. The system of the single party, which has replaced the old plurality of parties, is justified only as long as it is indispensable to the security of the revolution and until new selected personalities enter into office...”

To conclude, von Papen courageously puts his finger on the wound:

“Every process of purification,” he declares, “necessarily leaves scoriae whose defilement a head of government must avoid. Foreign countries point to these scoriae and see in them a symptom of decomposition. Let them not rejoice too soon! For if we find in ourselves the energy necessary to rid ourselves of them, we shall thereby prove that we are strong enough not to let our revolution be disfigured and to keep it on the path we have traced for it.”

These phrases of the Vice-Chancellor produce a lively sensation abroad. But not in Germany, where they pass unnoticed. It is not without reason that Goebbels has brought the press “into line” and exercises absolute control over it. Only the Frankfurter Zeitung dares to reproduce extracts from the Marburg speech. Its issue is immediately seized and the subscribers’ copies withdrawn from the post offices. Thus the only response to von Papen’s speech is a deathly silence. The bishops of Fulda do not take up the challenge. Brüning emigrates a few days later to the United States...

Mussolini has advised Hitler to “put order in his house.” But where to begin? The first news brought to him as he descends from the airplane consists of

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stenographic reports of the Marburg meeting. Hitler rages “against the pretentious jargon of reactionary circles.” He has had enough of being the target of their criticisms. But at the moment when his vindictiveness is about to fall upon them, Goering brings him a police file on Röhm and the S.A., which directs his anger in another direction.

This file has been established through the offices of Daluge, the new Director General of the police. It is made up of a heap of letters seized by censorship, telephone-monitoring sheets reproducing conversations exchanged by the S.A. leaders, reports from informers, and anonymous denunciations. No doubt there is no question in it of an attempt against Hitler, but reading it nonetheless reveals an alarming state of mind. The leaders of the Assault Sections do not conceal their refusal to accept being sent on leave. They will never tolerate being stripped of their power; on the contrary, they intend to make use of their strength “to break — willingly or by force — the chains that the reactionary parties have imposed on Hitler.”

It emerges, moreover, from this whole set of documents, that the S.A. generals feel only a limited respect for the person of their leader. As he goes through them, Hitler stumbles upon many an offensive epithet, many a sarcastic reflection that wounds him all the more because they come from individuals whom he has drawn out of nothing and who owe him everything. Without him, what would Heines be, who leads the life of a satrap and commands eighty-five thousand men in Silesia? A poor waiter...

Hitler shakes his head: if these elements ever gained the upper hand, they would never let him accomplish his task; they would force him into civil war. The Reichswehr would be obliged to intervene. Who knows whether foreign countries would not do the same? One would then return to the dark days of 1919. It would be the collapse of the Third Reich, that collapse which his enemies await with such impatience.

If he does not wish to compromise the reconstruction under way, Hitler cannot content himself with

half-measures. He must break, once and for all, the S.A. revolt. To do this, he must impose its leave against all opposition and take advantage of this interval to purge its cadres. When the S.A. returns from this period of “vacation,” it will in any case no longer be in its present form...

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On 23 June, Hitler goes to Neudeck to inform Hindenburg of the decisions he has just taken. But the old Marshal is very weakened and can receive him only hurriedly. His mood is execrable. Without giving Hitler time to explain the reasons for his visit, he reproaches him in bitter terms “for letting certain young men evoke the possibility of a second revolution” and assures him “that Röhm and his S.A. are in collusion with them.”

“It is high time that you put a little order in the house!” he says to him in a weary voice, dismissing him with his hand.

This is the second time Hitler has received the same “advice.” First Mussolini, now Hindenburg! And it is not finished. For General von Blomberg, whom he encounters on leaving the Marshal’s bedroom, will return to this theme for the third time.

“The Army needs time and reflection to complete its transformation,” the Minister of the Reichswehr says to him. “If the Party must merge with the State, it must still not be at the expense of the State. It would be time to put an end to this unhealthy agitation and to bring the extremists of your Party back to reason...”

* * *

But at Neudeck, Hitler receives not only rebuffs. By chance he also obtains a very interesting piece of information: namely, that General von Schleicher is beginning his intrigues again and that he has renewed secret relations with Gregor Strasser.

After Röhm, von Papen! After Papen, Schleicher...

As soon as he returns to Berlin, Hitler seeks to obtain confirmation of this rumor. A few hours later, the proofs are on his table. So the police knew about it! How is it that it did not inform him sooner?

Schleicher, in fact, is far from inactive. The former “Red Chancellor” has not forgotten the way in which Hitler brought about his fall in 1933, and believes that the hour has come to make him pay for his disgrace. A general without an army, a fascist without convictions, and a Socialist without support in the working class, he lost his friends when he lost his ministry.

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But now that events seem to be turning in his favor, he sees the possibility of reconquering everything at a single blow.

In December 1932, he had sought to undermine Hitler’s power by drawing Gregor Strasser and the workers’ unions into his camp. Now he thinks of allying himself with Röhm, with whom he is in

regular contact through the intermediary of a former member of the Stahlhelm, Baron Werner von Alvensleben.

The plans elaborated by Schleicher are relatively simple. In his eyes, the present regime cannot last any longer. The National Socialist government must give way, for a time, to a military dictatorship. Then one will proceed to the construction of the “social Reich.” Already lists of the future ministerial combination are circulating — without it being possible, moreover, to know whether they come from Schleicher or from agents provocateurs. Hindenburg is supposed dead and replaced by Prince August-Wilhelm of Hohenzollern, a weak being without character, who will take the title of Regent of the Empire. Hitler will be assassinated. Schleicher will become Chancellor in his place. Gregor Strasser will receive the portfolio of National Economy. As for Röhm, he will become Minister of the Reichswehr, “for it is fitting that the national formations and the army be in the same hands.”

Strasser and Röhm having approved this program, Schleicher believes himself assured of success. A short time earlier, he had met M. François-Poncet at the house of a great financier of the capital. During his conversation with the French ambassador, he is said to have let him understand that Hitler’s fall was imminent and that the government’s days were numbered. Now he declares, speaking of the National Socialists:

“All this band of scoundrels will soon be swept away.”

And to those who are frightened by this imprudent language, Schleicher answers with self-importance:

[Retained footnotes]

1. Cf. The New Statesman, 8 July 1934: Schleicher’s political dream.

2. Cf. the United Press dispatch of 5 July 1934. It is this conversation, reported to M. Barthou, that is said to have induced the Minister of Foreign Affairs to say to the representative of a foreign Power — probably Lord Tyrrell — “that France was not disposed to make concessions to Germany on the armaments question, because the days of the Hitler regime were numbered.” This fact is confirmed by Churchill in the first volume of his Memoirs. On the other hand, M. François-Poncet, in his *Souvenirs d’une ambassade à Berlin*, denies having known of and encouraged the maneuvers of Röhm and Schleicher.

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“What I am telling you is an open secret! Besides, reassure yourself: never will these madmen dare to attack me.”

Whichever way Hitler turns, in this second half of June, he feels the ground giving way beneath his feet. The army confines itself to an enigmatic silence; the S.A. are in full ferment; the old parties, recently dissolved, raise their heads again, and everywhere, in the shadows, the conspirators are stirring. Is the dictatorship going to collapse after fifteen months of government?

* * *

On 24 June, returning from a reception organized by Goering on his estate at Schorfheide, shots are

fired at Himmler's car. The commander of the black militia is wounded in the arm, but it is manifestly Hitler who was being aimed at. He owed his safety only to the fact that he did not occupy his usual place in the procession. It is not known who fired, but as a precautionary measure, Goering's S.A. guard is dissolved and replaced by an S.S. company that has come from Lower Franconia.

On the same day, Heines harangues part of the Silesian division, assembled at Breslau for the summer solstice festival:

"Do you want to rekindle the sacred fire in the heart of our people?" he asks his men. "Then say: yes!"

"Yes!" roar the fifteen thousand S.A. men.

"Do you want to leap at the throat of all the enemies of true German socialism?"

"Yes!" repeat the brown shirts.

The general nervousness grows from day to day. It is expressed in the more and more aggressive tone of speeches and proclamations.

On the morning of 25 June, Dr. Schacht informs the Chancellor that, since the establishment of the moratorium (9 June 1933), the Reichsbank's gold reserves have fallen from 925 million marks to 150 million, and that if this hemorrhage continues there will soon be nothing left in the till.

"How can this state of things be remedied?" Hitler asks him.

"Restore confidence, or resort to inflation," the President of the Reichsbank replies laconically.

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Inflation? This single word is enough to make him shudder, for no more than sixty million Germans has he forgotten the torments of 1923. All the more reason to finish with the S.A. extremists, whose agitation worries industrial and banking circles. Hitler does not only need the support of the Reichswehr. He must also inspire confidence in the thousands of experts, specialists, and minor civil servants who make the heavy economic machine "turn."

A few hours later, Rudolf Hess speaks on Cologne radio and warns the enemies of the regime — those of the right as well as those of the left — that they would be wrong to count on longer impunity:

"He who has the honor of having belonged to the Party for a long time," declares the Führer's deputy, "will see certain of his weaknesses judged with indulgence, because of the services rendered to the common cause. The Führer will pardon small personal deviations in view of the scope of the achievements. But if the Party is obliged to enter into the struggle, it will do so according to the National Socialist principle: if you strike, strike hard!"

"National Socialism could not be replaced by the monarchy, nor by 'selected conservative forces,' nor by criminal maneuvers that adorn themselves with the pompous name of 'second revolution.'"

"In modern countries, endowed with a complex economic structure, revolutions cannot be carried out

on the model of the seasonal coups d'état of the little South American republics. If the Führer wanted to play that game, he would play it as well as anyone. But he has not wanted it. Adolf Hitler is and remains a revolutionary of grand style. He has no need of crutches!"

On 28 June, Goering in his turn addresses the National Socialists of Hamburg. Without vain oratorical effects or veiled allusions, he lets the enemies of the regime know what punishment they expose themselves to:

"To pull a people from the mud in order to raise it toward the sun is a superhuman task... The foundation on which the Reich rests is confidence in the Führer. Whoever undermines that confidence commits a crime against the people and makes himself guilty of high treason! Whoever seeks to destroy that confidence seeks to destroy Germany! Whoever sins against that confidence has signed his own death warrant!"

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Since the previous day, the Reichswehr has been confined to its quarters. All leaves have been canceled and the officers have received the order to rejoin their units.

In the National Socialist camp, preparations are also being made feverishly. The black militias are on alert. A certain number of S.S. sections are armed with rifles, with one hundred and twenty cartridges per rifle. The shock troop known by the name of the Grossbeeren S.S. section is on a war footing. Certain formations of the motor corps, or N.S.K.K., are mobilized and armed with carbines.

At this point it is learned that Röhm has summoned all S.A. commanders to a conference. The meeting is to take place on 30 June at Wiessee, in Bavaria, on the shore of Lake Tegern, where the Chief of Staff is taking a cure. In addition, all S.A. units have received the order to hold themselves at the disposal of their chiefs.

"As the situation was becoming more explosive day by day," says Hitler, "the mobilization of the S.A. on the eve of their departure on leave seemed unusual to me. I therefore decided to relieve the Chief of Staff of his functions, on Saturday 30 June, to place him under strict arrest until further order, and to suppress a certain number of S.A. chiefs whose criminal maneuvers were notorious. Because of the tension of events, I thought that the Chief of Staff would probably not obey me if I summoned him to Berlin or elsewhere. I resolved in consequence to go myself to the Conference of the S.A. chiefs. Trusting in my personal authority and in the spirit of decision that had never failed me in critical moments, I planned to arrive there on Saturday at noon, to dismiss the Chief of Staff on the spot, to arrest the principal instigators of the plot, and to address a stirring appeal to the other S.A. commanders to recall them to their duty."

From that moment, events rush forward.

On Thursday 28 June, the Congress of German Chambers of Commerce Abroad is held in Berlin. But Hitler does not appear there. He has left for Essen, under the pretext of attending the wedding of M. Terboven, one of the influential members of the Party,

[Retained footnotes]

1. Cf. Manchester Guardian, issue of 29 August 1934.

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but in reality in order to meet certain prominent personalities of the metallurgical industry.

On Friday the 29th, the Führer inspects the Labor Service camps in Westphalia. Toward noon, he receives alarming information: the conspirators are said to be on the point of passing to action. Hitler immediately interrupts his tour and goes to Godesberg, a small town situated on the Rhine a little upstream from Bonn, where he settles in the hotel of his friend Dreesen, an old war comrade. Viktor Lutze, chief of the Hanover S.A., and Goebbels join him there during the afternoon. The chief of Propaganda, arriving from Berlin by airplane, brings him additional details on the conspiracy.

The morning had been exceptionally hot; but in the afternoon the atmosphere becomes suffocating. Clouds accumulate in the west and south. Around four o'clock, a storm of rare violence breaks over the Rhine valley. Lightning streaks the sky, while thunderclaps follow one another almost without interruption, filling the valley with their continuous rumbling.

For more than a year Hitler has been striving to avert the conflict and prevent it from reaching a tragic outcome. Now this outcome has become inevitable. But at the last moment, one would say that he hesitates. Yet is his line of conduct not clearly traced? How would he justify the repression of the communist ringleaders if he did not punish, with the same rigor, those who are preparing, in his own camp, to commit the same excesses? "These men," he will later declare, "had become as harmful as those whom we had fought." But however misguided they may be, they are his comrades in struggle. For years they have shared the same anxieties, the same hopes, and it is not without horror that he sees himself constrained to act harshly against them.

Around eight o'clock in the evening, the storm dies down. On learning that Hitler has arrived at Godesberg, the inhabitants of the area have organized a torchlight procession. They stream toward the hotel to greet and acclaim him. "I can still see the Führer," Goebbels writes, "on Friday evening around midnight, on the terrace of the hotel. Below, the band of the Labor Service had gathered.

[Retained footnotes]

1. In particular M. Krupp von Bohlen.

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Absorbed in his thoughts, the Führer silently fixed his gaze on the dark sky that stretched after the storm over the vast and harmonious landscape whose outlines were slowly fading into the night. Then, saluting with his hand, he received the enthusiastic homage of the Rhenish people.

"Among the crowd massed below, no one suspected the tragedy that was being prepared. Even among those standing above on the terrace, only a few insiders had been put into the secret. As always in difficult moments, the Führer had acted according to his precept: say only what must be said, to whom it must be said, and when it must be said."

At one o'clock in the morning, as the last strains of the Horst Wessel Lied die away, two alarming messages arrive from Berlin and Munich.

From Berlin comes the announcement that the alert has been given for the next day, at four o'clock in the afternoon; that trucks have been requisitioned for the transport of the shock troops, and that the action will begin at five o'clock precisely, by the sudden occupation of the ministerial buildings. Ernst has remained in the capital to direct the coup de force. From Munich it is learned that the troops are said to have already been alerted since nine o'clock in the evening and that the S.A. formations have received a secret mobilization order.

"This is an act of sedition!" Hitler roars on reading these messages. "The supreme chief of the S.A. is me, and no one else!"

"In these conditions," he will explain on 13 July to the deputies of the Reichstag, "it was necessary to act with lightning speed. Only a sudden intervention was perhaps still capable of stopping the revolt. There could be no doubt: it was better to strike down a hundred conspirators than to let ten thousand innocent S.A. men on one side, and ten thousand equally innocent civilians on the other, cut one another's throats. If Ernst's criminal action had been unleashed in Berlin, the consequences would have been incalculable. One shudders at the thought of what would have happened to Germany."

[Retained footnotes]

1. Dr. Joseph Goebbels, *Völkischer Beobachter*, issue of 2 July 1934.
2. Certain polemicists later declared that this news was fabricated. But they bring no convincing proof in support of their argument.

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After a few minutes of deliberation, the Führer's decision is taken: without waiting until the next day, he will leave immediately for Munich, in order personally to arrest the rebels.

At two o'clock in the morning, the heavy three-engine Junkers takes off from Hangelar airfield, near Bonn, and drives southward. The airplane carries seven passengers: Hitler, Goebbels, Otto Dietrich, chief of the press services, Viktor Lutze, and three bodyguards — Lieutenant Brückner, Staub, and Schreck — who accompany the Führer on all his journeys.

* * *

Throughout the duration of the trip, Hitler remains seated in the front of the fuselage, absorbed in his thoughts and staring at the black sky. At four o'clock in the morning, the airplane lands at Oberwiesenfeld, near Munich. M. Wagner, Minister of the Interior of Bavaria, and two or three Gauleiter, summoned by telegram before the departure from Godesberg, are waiting for Hitler on the airfield.

In the grayness of dawn, the little group of men confers rapidly. The district chiefs bring Hitler up to date on the latest events. During the night, several S.A. battalions have left their quarters and spread through the city shouting seditious cries. Their chiefs, summoned by M. Wagner to the Ministry of the

Interior, have been arrested and placed under guard. The Führer and his small escort immediately get into cars and go to the ministry, located in an old building near the Theatiner Church.

A radiant day is breaking: it is the morning of 30 June 1934. No one could imagine, in the sleeping city, that the day beginning will be, for Germany, one of the most tragic of the postwar period.

Arriving at the ministry, Hitler has the S.A. chiefs brought to him. There are General Schneidhuber, Obergruppenführer of Bavaria, General Schmidt, commander-in-chief of the Munich S.A., and several others still. Pale with anger, Hitler advances toward them, spits his contempt in their faces, and tears their command insignia from their shoulders. Then he hands them over to an S.S. platoon and has them taken to prison.

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They will be summarily judged and shot in the afternoon. The whole scene has lasted a little less than an hour.

Besides, there is not a minute to lose if the other conspirators are to be seized by surprise. At six o'clock, Hitler and his escort leave again for Wiessee, in order to arrest Röhm and his acolytes there. Besides Goebbels and Otto Dietrich, only his three bodyguards and a squad of S.S. accompany him.

The column of cars heads south, through the countryside that is awakening. On the left shines the silvery surface of Lake Tegern. The Hirschberg and the Wallberg raise toward the sky their dark-green silhouettes, gilded by the first rays of the rising sun. The weather promises to be magnificent. Hitler, still silent, is seated in the lead car, beside his chauffeur Schreck.

A little after seven o'clock, the cars stop in front of the annex of the Hanselbauer Hotel, where Röhm and his friends have established their headquarters. It is there that the conference of the S.A. chiefs is to be held.

The Führer and his escort get out and enter the hotel without encountering resistance. Then, not wishing to leave to anyone else the task of arresting the Chief of Staff, Hitler enters Röhm's room alone and unarmed. What happened then? It is probable that no one will ever know. No witness was present at the scene. There were only two men in the room, and one of the two was to die soon afterward, shot at point-blank range in a prison cell.

All that can be said is that Röhm, surprised in his sleep by Hitler's unexpected arrival, must have let himself be arrested without struggle, for hotel guests later declared that they had noticed nothing and had heard only a few shots outside, after the arrest.

In the room adjoining that of the Chief of Staff, Heines, general of the Silesian S.A., is apprehended in his turn, as are Count Spreti, Standartenführer of the Munich S.S., and Lieutenant Reiner, Röhm's aide-de-camp and chief of the political bureau of the S.A. The whole scene unfolds very quickly. The four men dress in haste and are handed over to the S.S. group waiting in the courtyard.

[Retained footnotes]

1. It seems that Heines was shot on the spot. This would explain the shots...

Around 7:45 an unexpected incident occurs that threatens to compromise the whole rest of the affair. One of the shock commandos recently created by Röhm arrives at Wiessee in trucks. It had supposedly been summoned there to render honors to the S.A. chiefs who are to take part in the Conference, but above all to ensure the protection of the conspirators. Hitler, still unarmed, advances toward the detachment commander and orders him, in a tone that admits no reply, to turn around and return to his quarters. The detachment commander obeys, and the column of trucks leaves again in the direction of Munich.

Hitler and his escort get into their cars and follow it at a short distance, taking with them Röhm and the other prisoners, solidly framed by S.S. militiamen. "Our return from Wiessee to Munich," Goebbels recounts, "was marked by a series of incidents that could have been dramatic. On the way we passed the cars of the S.A. chiefs who were traveling individually to the Conference and who sometimes followed one another at intervals of a few minutes. Among their occupants were a certain number of combat comrades who had remained loyal and who knew nothing at all about the affair. These were quickly brought up to date on the situation. The others, who were directly implicated in the plot and had made themselves guilty of high treason, were arrested personally by the Führer and handed over to the S.S. guards."

Around eleven o'clock, the caravan arrives at the Brown House. The Chief of Staff and the conspirators are transported under escort to Stadelheim Prison — the same prison in which Röhm had been incarcerated eleven years earlier, on the day after the Munich Putsch. Then Hitler reads the dispatches from Berlin. In execution of the instructions left by

[Retained footnotes]

1. It seems possible to deduce from this phrase that the plot was confined to Röhm and the members of his immediate entourage. These intended to inform the other chiefs of their projects during the Wiessee Conference, thus placing them before the accomplished fact, since the action was to begin at about the same hour in Berlin and Munich. Those who had not rallied to Röhm would then have been arrested and handed over to the shock commando.

2. It follows from this "sorting" — which we shall see repeated during the arrests in Berlin — that the Führer was perfectly informed about the activities of each S.A. chief. These had been watched for several weeks by Himmler's Gestapo and Goering's State Police.

the Führer before his departure, Goering has smothered the insurrectionary movement. Then, widening the frame of the repression, he has struck down, one after another, the principal leaders of the opposition. On the whole, the city is calm. The general uprising that had been feared has not occurred.

Hitler then gathers a certain number of S.A. commanders and Gauleiter in the council hall of the Brown House. He explains to them the genesis of the conflict and the measures he has been led to take in order to check the evil. "His speech," says Goebbels, "is, from beginning to end, an implacable indictment

against the little coterie that wanted to seize power in connivance with the reaction. These men placed themselves across his plans, to make them fail and to try to satisfy their personal ambitions.” Viktor Lutze, commander of the Hanover S.A., is appointed Chief of Staff in replacement of Röhm.

At the beginning of the afternoon, the repression begins. The executions are commanded by Colonel Busch, chief of the Uschla, or Party section of discipline and purification.

After having undergone a brief interrogation, the highest chiefs of the brown army are introduced, one by one, into the courtyard of Stadelheim. An order rings out. Then, at regular intervals, one hears the volleys of the firing squad crack.

To fire on compatriots is always painful. But to fire on comrades to whom one has long been bound by ties of friendship or esteem is atrocious; it is like tearing off a gangrenous limb. The men who belong to the firing squads have been handpicked from among the S.S. companies. They obey the following command:

“Such is the will of the Führer! Heil Hitler! Fire!”

The squads are composed of eight men, four of whom have rifles loaded with blanks, so that each man does not know whether he has killed or not. But despite all these precautions, they must be frequently renewed, for the firmest nerves do not withstand the sight of bodies falling, twitching, one after another.

A first volley brings down General August Schneidhuber, Obergruppenführer of the Bavarian S.A. and police prefect of Munich. A second volley brings down General Hans Hayn,

[Retained footnotes]

1. Hitler had summoned the Gauleiter by telegram the previous evening, before his departure from Godesberg.

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Gruppenführer of the Saxon S.A.; a third volley brings down General Hans Peter von Heydebreck, Gruppenführer of the Pomeranian S.A.; a fourth, General Schmidt, Gruppenführer of the Munich S.A.; a fifth, a sixth, a seventh bring down General Fritz von Kraussner, Colonel Lasch, Colonel Kopp; then come Count Erwin von Spreti, commander of the Munich S.S. regiment, Captain Uhl, Lieutenant Reiner, and others still...

As for Röhm, a revolver has been placed before him on the shelf of his cell. He has been granted the right to put an end to his own days. But he refuses to do so. He is then given ten minutes to reflect. When this delay has elapsed, the door of his cell opens. They fire inside until the Chief of Staff collapses. His body, riddled with bullets, is buried in the prison courtyard.

* * *

While these events are unfolding in Munich, Berlin is the theater of even more dramatic incidents.

In the first hours of the day, Goering has had his S.S. guard, recently arrived from Lower Franconia, drawn up before his palace in the Prinz-Albrechtstrasse. He briefly harangued his men, enjoining them to have courage and to obey their chiefs blindly. Then he sent two motorcyclists to the Cadet School at Lichterfelde, to bring a message there to Colonel Wecke, commander of a special corps of mobile guards called the "Goering column."

On receipt of this message, the Goering column mounts in trucks and takes the road to the Prinz-Albrechtstrasse. The S.S. guard joins it and the two troops roll together toward Tiergartenstrasse, where the headquarters of the Berlin-Brandenburg S.A. are located.

When Goering arrives there a few moments later, Colonel Wecke has already occupied the building by surprise. Machine guns are installed in all the corridors and the exits are guarded by armed sentries. In one room, all the S.A. chiefs have been lined against a wall, hands in the air. Goering passes before them and designates a certain number.

[Retained footnotes]

1. He had been arrested the same morning on the platform of Munich station.

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These are immediately taken to Lichterfelde prison.

Then Goering returns to his ministry, where he has summoned Vice-Chancellor von Papen.

"The day is going to be very agitated," he says to him. "The salvation of the nation and of the Reich is at stake. No one knows what may happen. I strongly advise you to remain at your home and not to leave it under any pretext."

Von Papen understands that his life is in danger and goes to shut himself up at home. Then he telephones the Ministry of the Reichswehr and asks that a company be sent to ensure his protection.

At the same hour, six men in civilian clothes stop before General von Schleicher's villa, ring, force the door, and burst into the room where the former Chancellor is. A brief discussion is heard, followed by several detonations. The general collapses, killed on the spot. His wife, who had rushed between him and his assailant, is mortally wounded. She dies half an hour later without having regained consciousness.

This execution marks the beginning of a series of raids that will give 30 June, in Berlin, a particularly atrocious character.

Around noon, five Gestapo inspectors come to fetch Gregor Strasser from his home. The inspectors take him to his office, at the headquarters of the Schering-Kahlbaum Chemical Company, to conduct a search there. Then they hand him over to an S.S. platoon, which takes him away by car. He will not be seen again.

Also around noon, Erich Klausener, political leader of the Berlin Catholics and von Papen's right hand, is in his office at the Ministry of Transport. Two S.S. men burst into the room and place him under

arrest. Despite the order received, Klausener wants to go out, gets up, and takes his hat. Two bullets strike him in the back, at the moment when he is about to cross the threshold. Klausener collapses, his hat on his head. The S.S. lock the office door and place two sentries to prevent anyone from entering.

A similar scene unfolds at the same instant at the Vice-Chancellery. Counselor von Bose, von Papen's chief of staff, is in his office in the company of

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two industrialists. Three S.S. men burst in and ask Bose to follow them into an adjoining room. A few shots are heard. The S.S. withdraw. Bose's corpse lies on the ground, bathing in a pool of blood.

A few hours later, Colonel von Bredow, confidant of von Schleicher, is fetched from his home. He is made to get into a car, where he will be murdered. Edgar Jung, the author of the Marburg speech, Walther Schotte, intimate adviser to von Papen, and Dr. Voss, Strasser's lawyer, also disappear, without the exact circumstances of their death ever being known.

In the afternoon, the S.A. chiefs assembled in Lichterfelde prison are executed in their turn. The scene that then unfolds in the prison courtyard forms a counterpart to the shootings at Stadelheim.

There is General Ernst, Obergruppenführer of the Berlin S.A., arrested that very morning near Bremen, at the moment when he was preparing to flee abroad; Colonel von Detten, S.A. Standartenführer in Berlin; Gerd, a former aviator decorated with the order "Pour le Mérite," whom Goering degrades himself before having him shot, as well as a certain number of sub-chiefs arrested at the headquarters on Tiergartenstrasse.

The prisoners are pressed against the wall one after the other. The firing squad is only five meters away. At this distance, the discharges produce terrible effects. Soon the entire wall is splashed with blood.

Although the volleys follow one another almost without interruption, it seems that the execution will never end. Certain S.S. men, broken by nervous tension, cannot withstand the ordeal and must be replaced. The others keep firing, moved by a sort of savage frenzy. It is all the violence accumulated over these fifteen years of struggles that is released at a single blow.

An oppressive atmosphere reigns over the capital. The speed and vigor of the repression have terrorized minds. Rumors circulate according to which the number of victims is much higher than is being said. It is even claimed that Hitler has been assassinated.

The repression begins to leave the bounds assigned to it. Under cover of legal action, a few uncontrolled groups take advantage of the opportunity to settle personal scores. This will raise the total number of victims to more than a thousand.

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Thus M. von Kahr, the former head of the Bavarian government, who played the role that is known during the Munich Putsch in 1923, is murdered by unknown men. His corpse is found a few days later in the marshes of Dachau. Thus also disappear Dr. Fritz Beck, director of the Munich Student House;

Dr. Gerlich, former editor-in-chief of a Bavarian newspaper; the lawyer Alexandre Glaser, Dr. Willy Schmidt, and others still...

Hitler left Munich during the afternoon. At six o'clock in the evening, his airplane lands at Tempelhof airfield. Himmler, commander-in-chief of the S.S., who has his arm in a sling since the Schorfheide attack, and Sepp Dietrich, chief of the Führer's personal bodyguard, are waiting for him on the airfield to report the events to him.

One of Hitler's first concerns, on returning to the Chancellery, is to prevent the repression from taking on greater extension. "The peril having been averted, and the revolt being able to be considered broken," he will later declare, "it was necessary to prevent political passions, carried to their paroxysm, from provoking a series of lynchings. Consequently, I forbade in the most formal way all new measures of repression, and ordered the punishment of all those who had committed excesses."

That same evening, a certain number of S.S. men who have exceeded the orders received, or who have made themselves guilty of abuses toward prisoners, are in their turn led to the execution post. Late into the night, gunfire can still be heard crackling. Then the shots become more spaced out. Around one o'clock in the morning, everything falls back into silence.

* * *

The next day, 1 July, the capital gradually resumes its customary appearance. A storm has passed over Germany with the violence of a typhoon. Now the atmosphere seems purified and relaxed.

The crowd, which had believed Hitler dead, masses before the Chancellery.

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When the Führer appears at the window, it acclaims him frenetically.

Seeing his waxy complexion and drawn features, it understands that he has just made for it the most painful sacrifice, and the crowd has, for such things, an infallible instinct. It breathes more freely, delivered from the anguish that had gripped it for several weeks.

But the repression of 30 June has not only dismissed the specter of the second revolution. It has eliminated, at the same time, the dangerous antagonism that threatened to bring the brown army and the Reichswehr into conflict. In twenty-four hours, the situation is completely transformed.

This evolution is already clearly perceptible in the proclamation that General von Blomberg addresses, that same day, to the officers and soldiers of the army:

To the Wehrmacht!

The Führer himself attacked and crushed the mutineers and traitors, with the decision of a soldier and exemplary courage.

The Wehrmacht, as the sole armed force of the whole nation, while remaining apart from internal struggles, will show him its gratitude by its devotion and its fidelity.

The Führer asks us to maintain cordial relations with the new S.A. We shall do so with joy, conscious of serving a common ideal.

The state of alert is lifted throughout the Reich.

VON BLOMBERG.

In the evening, Marshal Hindenburg, who is still at Neudeck, sends a telegram of congratulations to the Führer:

It emerges from the reports I have had submitted to me, he writes to him, that you have crushed all seditious maneuvers and attempts at treason, thanks to your personal, energetic, and courageous intervention.

You have saved the German people from a grave peril. I express to you my deep gratitude and my sincere esteem.

VON HINDENBURG.

On Monday 2 July, Hitler addresses an order of the day to all S.A. chiefs:

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I demand of all S.A. chiefs the most perfect discipline. I ask moreover that they give proof of loyalty and fidelity without reserve toward the army of the Reich.

This order of the day is followed by this official communiqué:

The purification action has been finished since yesterday evening. New measures of repression will no longer take place. Thus the intervention for the restoration of security in Germany lasted twenty-four hours. The most complete calm and order reign throughout the Empire.

The next day, 3 July, Hitler gathers the Council of Ministers and reports the events to it. He explains the necessity in which he found himself to act without delay, in order to avoid the loss of thousands of human lives. At the end of the Council, the Cabinet adopts a law, whose single article declares legal the measures taken on 30 June and the following days, because they were dictated by the right of legitimate self-defense of the State.

This succession of communiqués and declarations ends with an order of the day from Viktor Lutze, which is his first official act as the new Chief of Staff of the S.A.:

The thirty-day leave prescribed for the S.A. is maintained. The wearing of the uniform is authorized during this period only in the special cases provided for by the decree.

The name of the man who acted as a traitor toward our Führer Adolf Hitler, engraved on the blade of the daggers of honor, must be erased from it as soon as possible; after this, these daggers may continue to be worn in service.

Finally, on 13 July, Hitler delivers a great speech before the Reichstag. Dwelling at length on the genesis of the crisis, he shows the S.A. Staff isolating itself more and more from the Party and the nation, and seeking to draw the Assault Sections into a second revolution. He recounts how Röhm, won over by the megalomania of his entourage, ended by wanting to substitute the brown army for the Reichswehr. Then he describes his efforts to bring him back to reason, his hope of avoiding a conflict despite everything, and evokes the long interview

[Retained footnotes]

1. Staatsnotwehrgesetz of 3 July 1934.

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of five hours during which he implored him one last time not to provoke a terrible catastrophe. Finally, he relates the events of the last fortnight of June, the growing tension of minds, the equivocal maneuvers of Schleicher and of reactionary circles, the preparations of the conspirators, and explains how the alarming news received at Godesberg on 30 June, at two o'clock in the morning, removed his last scruples and decided him to crush the revolt in blood:

“The tribute paid by the guilty was very heavy,” he declares. “Nineteen superior S.A. chiefs, thirty-one S.A. chiefs and members of the brown militias were shot; three S.S. chiefs and civilians compromised in the plot underwent the same fate. Thirteen S.A. chiefs and civilians lost their lives in trying to oppose their arrest. Three others committed suicide. Five Party members not belonging to the S.A. were also shot. Three S.S. men who had made themselves guilty of excesses toward prisoners were shot. In addition a certain number of acts of violence were committed that had no relation to the repressive action. Their authors will be judged according to the usual procedure...

“If someone reproaches me for not having brought the guilty before the regular courts, I can only answer: it is always by decimating them that order has been restored in mutinous divisions. From all eternity, mutinies have been broken by the same iron laws. Only one State did not dare make use of martial law, and that is why that State collapsed: the Germany of 1918. I did not wish to deliver the young Reich to the same fate as the old...

“I myself gave the order to shoot the guilty; I also gave the order to carry the red-hot iron into the wound and to burn, down to the flesh, all the abscesses that infected our internal life and poisoned opinion abroad. And I also gave the order to strike down immediately by arms all mutineers who made the slightest attempt to oppose their arrest. In this hour, I was responsible for the fate of the German nation, and, by that fact, I was the supreme judge of the German people.

“However heavy these sacrifices may have been, they will not have been vain if they contribute to anchoring in minds the certainty that any inclination toward conspiracy or treason will be broken, without consideration of rank or person. I firmly hope that when destiny relieves me from the place I occupy, my successor will not act otherwise than I have done, and

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that on the day when he too must go away, the third — after us — will know how to ensure with no less energy the security of the people and the survival of the nation.”

[Retained footnotes]

1. Speech delivered before the Reichstag on 13 July 1934. Text published by the Völkischer Beobachter of 14 July 1934 (extracts).

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THE REORGANIZATION OF THE S.A. — HITLER REICHSFÜHRER. — THE ARMAMENTS
RACE OF 1934-1935. — THE REICH RESTORES COMPULSORY MILITARY SERVICE

“A political act,” said Joseph de Maistre, “is judged not by the victims it makes, but by the evils it avoids.” It is from this angle that the events of 30 June must be judged. Now, whatever feelings they may inspire in us, it is certain that their effects were salutary for the German nation as a whole.

During the weeks that precede the tragic day, it seems that all the constituent elements of the State are in the process of disintegrating. 30 June gives the Reich a shock that puts them back in place. The central authority emerges strengthened. The opposition falls silent. The S.A. is purged of its revolutionary virus. The army rallies to the new regime. With a few exceptions, the repression has struck so exactly those it wanted to strike down that the mass of the nation has felt almost nothing. This is what explains the speed with which it forgets it: a month later, the memory of the drama is almost effaced. A new chapter opens in the history of the Third Reich.

This chapter begins with the reorganization of the S.A. Until now, brown militias, black militias, and motorized groups were concentrated in Röhm’s hands. One of Hitler’s first acts consists in separating these different formations and giving each of them an autonomous chief, depending directly on him. On 20 July 1934, a decree makes the S.S. independent of the S.A. and places it entirely under Himmler’s orders. Then the motorized groups are separated from the S.A. and attached to the N.S.K.K., or motor corps, commanded by Major Hühnlein. The S.A.

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itself is reworked and lightened of all the surplus personnel with which it had swollen. Finally, each of these three groups is invested with particular functions, which avoids any encroachment on their respective domains.

Viktor Lutze, appointed Chief of Staff of the S.A. in the afternoon of 30 June, begins by replacing the executed chiefs. In Berlin, after Ernst’s death, command of the S.A. division has been provisionally entrusted to Karl Daluege, chief of the capital’s S.S. and general of the Landespolizei. On 27 July, von Jagow is appointed Gruppenführer of the Berlin-Brandenburg S.A. on a definitive basis. Daluege hands over to him the functions he has exercised on an interim basis. It is the same everywhere where commands are vacant, notably in Bavaria, Saxony, Pomerania, and Silesia.

The total strength, which exceeded 3,000,000 in the spring of 1934, is progressively reduced to 1,200,000. This compression, combined with the dissociation of the S.S. and the motorized groups, permits a parallel reduction of the organs of command. The Obergruppen, or army corps, are suppressed, and the Groups are directly attached to the Chief of Staff. The double system of reserves

established by Röhm and designated under the names S.A.R. I and S.A.R. II is replaced by a more rational classification. The men of the Assault Sections are divided into three categories: the active force (comprising militiamen from eighteen to thirty-five years), the reserve (for militiamen from thirty-five to forty-five), and the Landsturm or territorial force (for militiamen more than forty-five years old).

Finally, the distribution of the units is made more homogeneous. From January 1936, the S.A. will comprise: a supreme chief (the Führer), a Chief of Staff (Viktor Lutze), a Staff grouping the different services of the High Command (direction, personnel, justice, administration, hygiene, etc.); twenty-one groups, ninety-seven brigades, and 627 Standarten or regiments, subdivided, as in the past, into Sturmabanne (battalions), Stürme (companies), Trupps (sections), and Scharen (platoons).

The S.A. are not armed. Their function, exclusively political, consists in serving as an organ of self-defense and propaganda for the Party. Despite their hierarchy, their uni-

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form, and the discipline to which they are bound, they are not military formations, but groups of militants. "Physically," writes Jean Fayard, "an S.A. militiaman is the instrument of political power. Morally, he is a minor priest of a new religion."

Very different are the structure and function of the S.S. At first placed under the tutelage of the S.A. Staff, the S.S., or black militias, numbered 100,000 men in January 1933. From 20 July 1934, their number will be raised to about 200,000, distributed into ten sectors (Oberabschnitte), thirty sections (Abteilungen), and eighty-five regiments (Standarten).

The S.S. formations are classified into three categories: the non-specialized S.S. (Allgemeine S.S.); the S.S. at the disposal of the Party chiefs (Verfügungs-S.S.); the surveillance S.S. (S.S. Wachverbände). Only the units belonging to the last two categories wear the steel helmet and are equipped with the same weapons as the infantry regiments of the Reichswehr.

The Verfügungs-S.S. comprise three regiments and two battalions. One of these regiments, the Leibstandarte, whose members in full dress wear aiguillettes and white belts, serves as the Führer's personal bodyguard and has as its emblem the flag of 9 November. The S.S. Wachverbände, divided into centuries, are charged with the secret police and the surveillance of the concentration camps.

Attached to the S.S. Staff (S.S. Hauptamt) are two annexed organizations: the Central Security Office (Sicherheits-Hauptamt) and the Office of Racial Colonization (Rassen- und Siedlungsamt). These correspond to the following two functions: first, to ensure the political police and watch over "all those who nourish bad intentions toward the Führer and the nation"; second, to serve as colonists in the eastern provinces and oppose to Slavic infiltrations a "dike of Germanic blood."

To this end, the members of the S.S. are subjected to a very severe selection. Recruited principally from the peasant class, their height must not be less than 1.76 meters,

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1. Cf. *Candide*, issue of 7 October 1937.

and their physical appearance must approach, as much as possible, the pure Aryan type. They have the right to marry only women meeting the same racial specifications. Those who desire to settle in the frontier provinces after the expiration of their period of service receive government aid to this end. Finally, they are subject to a special code of honor: under the law of 9 November 1935, each member of the S.S. has not only the right but the duty to defend his honor by arms.

The National Socialist motor corps (N.S.K.K.) is commanded by a Bavarian, Major Hühnlein, former member of the von Epp Free Corps and later staff officer in the 7th division of the Reichswehr. It comprises about 500,000 volunteers, distributed into four inspectorates, three motorized groups, and twenty-one brigades, each corresponding to a S.A. group. This corps does not merely aim to permit the rapid transport of S.A. and S.S. formations without having recourse to army matériel. It must also accelerate the motorization of the nation. In liaison with the Hitler Youth and the Labor Service, the N.S.K.K. must train each year an increasing number of drivers and mechanics, who will then do their service in the motorized units of the Wehrmacht.

* * *

Toward the end of July, while this work of recasting and reorganization is under way, it is learned from Neudeck that Marshal Hindenburg's health is causing anxiety to his entourage. His strength declines. Despite his eighty-seven years, the old man still struggles. But soon all hope must be abandoned: the Marshal is going to die.

This news deeply saddens the Germans, but causes them no surprise. Since the month of May, it had been known that the President's days were numbered.

Now the Marshal has only a few hours left to live. Like a captain who has guided his ship through the storm, he has remained at the helm until the entrance to the port.

With the last survivors of the imperial epoch, he has reached the shores of the Third Reich, bearing at arm's length the Reichswehr that he protected against many perils. If he reviews in his mind that troubled epoch that

was called "the Republic," what scenes dominate the confused melee of men and events? Is it the Grand Council of Spa or the retreat of the armies of the West, the signing of the Peace Treaty or his accession to the Presidency? If one asked him, he would no doubt answer that these contrasting images have faded in his memory, covered over by the memories of Sedan and Sadowa, whose charges remain associated with the first emotions of his youth.

As for this Third Reich toward which, without knowing it, he has led Germany, it is not his work, and there is no doubt that he never approved its spirit. He recognized it and held it over the baptismal font of power, but his task stopped there. He had grown up in a world too different to be able to adapt himself to it — a world founded on respect for hereditary power and fidelity toward the dynasty, a

world all of whose manifestations gravitated around that single star: the Emperor! It is certainly toward him that his last thoughts go, and behind him, to the long line of sovereigns who gradually raised Prussia to the rank of a great world Power.

A giant arch stretched between two centuries with no common measure between them: such is the image under which his life appears to us. Now this arch is collapsing, and while in the great salon of Neudeck, transformed into a chapel of rest, four officers stand guard at the corners of the catafalque where the victor of Tannenberg lies, draped in the white mantle with the Maltese cross of the Knights of Saint John, people in Berlin wonder who will ensure his succession. The most diverse rumors circulate on this subject. Some assert that a Hohenzollern prince will be named Statthalter of the Reich. Others claim that Hitler is thinking of restoring the monarchy...

But at the very hour when the President breathes his last, a Cabinet Council meeting at the Chancellery adopts a legal text that cuts short all these hypotheses and that the crowd can read a few hours later, placarded on all the public buildings of the Reich:

The functions of President of the Reich are fused with those of Chancellor of the Empire. In consequence, all the powers and prerogatives of the President are transferred to Führer and

[Retained footnotes]

1. It was — one remembers — the project [see] p. 189.

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Chancellor Adolf Hitler. He himself will designate his representative.

Berlin, 1 August 1934.

Ad. Hitler,
Rudolf Hess, von Papen, von Neurath,
Dr. Frick, Count Schwerin von Krosigk,
Franz Seldte, Dr. Gürtner, von Blomberg,
von Eltz, Walter Darré, Dr. Goebbels,
Hermann Goering, Dr. Rust, Hjalmar Schacht.

The problem of the succession is thus settled. But this decision could never have been taken without the consent of the Reichswehr. It is now that Hitler gathers the fruit of his intervention of 30 June. Until then, the generals regarded him with mistrust. Now that he has sacrificed to the State some of the highest-placed members of his Party, they consider that he has proved himself and agree to recognize him as supreme chief of the Reich.

The law of 1 August invests Hitler with a certain number of new powers. "The Führer does not merely bring together in his hands all the rights that belong to him and the duties incumbent on him as chief of the Party, Chancellor of the Empire, and President of the Reich," writes Dr. Wilhelm Stuckart. "His powers in reality exceed the competences attributed until now to these offices. He is the political Führer of the nation, the absolute Chief of the State administration, the Supreme Judge of the people, and the Commander-in-Chief of the army." Never in Germany have so many powers been accumulated

on the head of a single man. Hitler, moreover, takes care to specify at the end of the Cabinet Council that he will not take the title of President of the Reich, “which remains indissolubly linked to the glorious figure of the Marshal”; he will call himself “Reichsführer and Chancellor.”

The next day, 2 August, Hitler receives the oath of General von Blomberg, Minister of the Reichswehr, of General von Fritsch, chief of the Heeresleitung, and of Admiral Roeder, chief of the Marine-Amt. The formula of the oath is the following:

“I solemnly swear before God to obey in all circumstances Adolf Hitler, Führer of the Reich and of the German people, Supreme Chief of the Wehrmacht.

[Retained footnotes]

2. Dr. Wilhelm Stuckart, Die Sonderverwaltung des dritten Reiches, Völkischer Beobachter, special issue of January 1936.

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“I pledge myself at all times to act as a valiant soldier and to respect this oath, even at the peril of my life.”

At the same hour, in all the garrisons of the Reich, the soldiers and noncommissioned officers, forming a square in the courtyards of their barracks, take the same oath before their officers.

But Hitler does not intend to “reign” by virtue of a single blank check issued by the army. He wants to have his decision approved by the whole nation. That is why, that very evening, he addresses the following letter to M. Frick, Minister of the Interior of the Reich:

I want the constitutional Decision taken by the Cabinet to confer upon my person the functions exercised by the late President of the Reich to receive the explicit sanction of the German people.

Deeply convinced that all sovereignty emanates from the people and must be confirmed by them, by means of a free and secret vote, I ask you to take the necessary measures to submit the Cabinet’s decision to the German people, so that they may pronounce upon it by way of referendum.

In acting thus, Hitler runs no risk. What would he have to fear from a popular consultation? In the presidential elections of 1932, he had already received more than thirteen million votes while Hindenburg was still alive. Now Hindenburg is dead. Hitler disposes of the entire apparatus of the State. The army has sworn an oath to him. The S.A. and the S.S. are no longer in his hands anything but docile instruments. No other candidacy can oppose his.

Yet a shadow hangs over this triumph. What would happen if Marshal Hindenburg had left a testament and if in it he designated another successor than Hitler? Does this hypothesis not explain the haste with which the transfer of powers was carried out? One could at least have waited until the illustrious deceased had been buried...

These are questions many people are asking themselves. And as always in such cases, imaginations run loose. A thousand suppositions are built up, each more fanciful than the last; people end by persuading

themselves that the testament exists, but that it has deliberately been hidden under a bushel.

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What could it have contained? Very quickly, a real myth is created around the “disappeared testament.” So much so that the Chancellery finds itself obliged, on the evening of 3 August, to publish the following communiqué:

All rumors relating to a posthumous message of the President of the Reich to the German people are without foundation. Marshal von Hindenburg left no political testament.

But like all denials, this text convinces no one. It rather reinforces the thesis of the “disappeared testament.”

On 6 August, the first funeral ceremony takes place at the Reichstag, which has sat since the fire at the Kroll Opera. Two rows of men in uniform line both sides of the avenue leading to it. The honors are rendered on one side by soldiers of the Reichswehr, on the other by militiamen of the S.A. and the S.S. These two walls of men — brown and black on the left, feldgrau on the right — find themselves again face to face, as at the ceremony of Potsdam, 21 March 1933. But they no longer form two hostile groups staring at each other in silence. There is no longer “the President’s army” and “the Chancellor’s army.” Both are sworn to the same Supreme Chief.

The evening and night are marked by various ceremonies that culminate, on the morning of 7 August, in the grandiose funeral at Tannenberg.

In the heart of East Prussia, not far from the battlefield where Hindenburg had crushed the Russian armies of General Samsonoff in August 1914, there stands an octagonal building, whose squat ramparts are dominated by eight granite towers. It is at once an oppidum, a bastion of Germanism, and a military sanctuary destined to receive the remains of German marshals.

Seen from afar, the mass of its square donjons outlined against the sky impresses. But seen close up, the edifice offers an even more impressive spectacle. A bare cross rises in the middle of the lawn that carpets the courtyard of honor. The towers have been decorated for the occasion with twists of oak leaves and long veils of crepe that flutter in the breeze. The Marshal’s coffin, placed on an artillery limber, was transported there during the night.

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Around ten o’clock, brought by car, by airplane, and by five special trains, the members of the government and the guests of honor arrive. They take their places within the enclosure, amid a forest of standards that had once belonged to the regiments of Wilhelm II. In the stands one recognizes many survivors of the old regime, vestiges escaped as if by miracle from an immense fire. Marshal von Mackensen, in full dress as a Hussar of Death and wearing his legendary black schapska, dominates the assembly by his tall stature. Von Papen has put on the uniform of the 1st regiment of Guard Uhlans, in which he served in his youth under von Schlieffen. A single witness of the “great epoch” makes himself noticed by his absence: Ludendorff. Even on the threshold of death, the former First Quartermaster-General did not wish to be reconciled with his old rival.

A Protestant pastor pronounces an address; Hitler advances, salutes the catafalque with outstretched arm, says a few words, and withdraws. After this, to the sounds of the funeral march from Twilight of the Gods, Hindenburg's coffin is carried into the Tower of the Marshals, while an artillery battery, placed outside the enclosure, fires, as for sovereigns, a salute of one hundred and one cannon shots.

* * *

Now that the funeral is over and the Marshal rests in his granite crypt, nothing remains but to proceed with the referendum, which is, to tell the truth, no more than a simple formality. Its date is fixed for 19 August.

But whether one wants it or not, an uneasiness remains. The people cannot manage to believe that Hindenburg died without having drafted his last wishes. The "disappeared testament" returns to the surface, like a corpse whose stench poisons the atmosphere.

The people are right: they trusted their instinct, and their instinct did not deceive them. On 15 August, that is to say four days before the vote, Oskar von Hindenburg, the Marshal's son, brings two envelopes to M. von Papen. One bears the mention: For Adolf Hitler. On the other is spread this inscription, traced in a majestic handwriting: This is my testament to the German people

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and to its Chancellor. This letter is to be transmitted by my son to the Chancellor of the Reich.

The contents of the first envelope will never be divulged. The second is a sixteen-page document in which the old Marshal relates the vicissitudes of his existence and sets out at length his record of service. It contains a surprise, but not the one that was expected. After a long preamble, in which the former Commander-in-Chief expresses, once more, his monarchist convictions, it ends with this paragraph:

I give thanks to Providence for having permitted me, in the evening of my life, to witness the hour of national recovery. I thank all those who have contributed to Germany's restoration, with disinterested love of the Fatherland. My Chancellor Adolf Hitler and his Movement have accomplished a decisive step, and one of great historical significance, in restoring its unity to the German people, without distinction of class or profession. I know that much still remains to be done, and I wish with all my heart that the great act of national resurrection and popular unification may be crowned by a reconciliation that will embrace the entire German Fatherland.

Is this a coup de théâtre engineered by the Minister of Propaganda? This document arrives too opportunely not to awaken suspicions...

But Goebbels has nothing to do with it. This text, which fulfills Hitler's wishes, is authentic. And as some minds continue to show themselves skeptical, Oskar von Hindenburg himself will come to the radio, on the eve of the referendum, to dispel the last doubts that might remain:

"My father, now deceased," he declares, "himself saw in Adolf Hitler his immediate successor as Supreme Chief of the German Reich. I therefore obey the wishes expressed by my venerated father, by

inviting all men and all the

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1. These are, von Papen judges, counsels on the manner of governing that Hitler will keep to himself. (Cf. Papen: Mémoires, pp. 240-241.)

2. At the time, people tried to contest the authenticity of this paragraph by alleging that its terminology resembled Hitler's more than the Marshal's. It is proved today that Hindenburg, after having modified certain terms of it, approved and signed it in the presence of his close collaborators.

3. Hitler learned of this text only on the morning of 15 August, the day of its publication.

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women of Germany, by the referendum of August 19, to ratify the transfer to the person of the Führer and Chancellor of the Reich of all the functions previously exercised by him.

From that point on, one may consider the game as played. The next day, August 19, the plebiscite instituted to approve the unification of the Reich under the leadership of the Führer took place.

By 38,362,760 votes, or 88.9% of all voters, the German people ratified Hitler's decision, whose title of Reichsführer thus became definitive.

While these events were taking place in Germany, it seemed as though a wind of panic were blowing over the world. Since the failure of the Disarmament Conference, the nations were throwing themselves frantically into an arms race, beside which the preparations of 1914 seemed like child's play. Swept away were the proposals for complete disarmament supported by M. Litvinov; swept away were the limitations written into the Hoover plan and vigorously defended by M. Norman Davis.

At Geneva, almost all the delegations had outbid one another in their desire to ensure universal peace and wrapped their ulterior motives in the hollow phraseology that was current coin at the Palace of Nations. Now the masks were falling; the hidden intentions were spread out in broad daylight, and the world appeared as it really was, that is, hard and cruel. The chimerical constructions of the politicians collapsed, and if the disillusion was bitter, at least the language of statesmen gained in sincerity.

Japan, which had left the League of Nations on March 26, 1933, had since then proceeded to the conquest of Manchukuo. But this operation was only the prelude to a gigantic plan that was going to launch it against Inner Mongolia and China.

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2. This figure marks a slight regression compared with the plebiscite of November 17, 1933, in which 93.6% of the electorate had voted for Hitler. This difference was due, not, as was believed at the time, to an increase in left-wing opposition to the regime, but to the fact that many elements of the right were still expecting a restoration of the monarchy and could not ratify a decision that destroyed their hopes.

“The struggle,” one reads in a brochure published in October 1934 by the Japanese government, “is the origin of the universe and the begetter of cultures. It commands the sources and the very course of life. National defense is the foundation of the existence and development of the State.

“The mission of the armed force, which constitutes the basis of the country’s defense, consists in making known to the world the ideal by which the Japanese Empire is inspired. This ideal is the sword, which chastises evil and makes good triumph. This sword is the symbol of justice. It bears no comparison with the principles of certain other countries, whose selfish appetites are dictated only by the desire to establish their supremacy over peoples weaker than themselves, in order to reduce them to slavery.

“The Japanese people stand on the eve of a decisive trial. Their duty and their interest require that they overcome it victoriously, in order to add a new page of glory to their three-thousand-year history.”

The same warlike fanfares were heard in the United States. Addressing the crews of the cruiser Houston on July 23, 1934, President Roosevelt declared that “the American fleet will be pushed to the extreme limit of its power,” which meant the laying down of 360,000 tons of new units. Shortly afterward, the aviation commission of the War Department, chaired by Mr. Newton Baker, announced “that America needs an air fleet of at least 2,320 aircraft.”

“The idea of war is in the air,” Mussolini exclaimed in his speech of August 24, 1934 on the Subordination of the Whole Life of the Nation to Military Necessities. And he added:

“War has been defined as the supreme juridical instance between peoples; and since peoples do not stop in their development, but obey the laws of their strength and their historical dynamism, war will endure, despite the more or less good intentions of those who wish to prevent it. Just as war stands at the beginning of human history, it will accompany it through the centuries to come.”

Taking a further step in the speech he delivered on February 26, 1935, the Duce proclaimed:

“Italy, heir to the virile traditions of the Roman Empire, must become a military nation, I would even say a

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1. The Importance of National Defense, Tokyo, 1934.

militarist nation. In the Fascist State, the functions of the citizen and those of the soldier are inseparable.”

Finally, on April 11, 1935, a semi-official article in the Popolo d’Italia announced that Italy intended to

have, in peacetime, an army of 600,000 men equipped with the most modern armament, and that it would accelerate the development of its air and naval fleet. The Italian admiralty undertook the construction of a series of new units and laid down two battleships of 35,000 tons.

The U.S.S.R., for its part, did not remain behind. Recounting the effort made in the course of the year 1934 to develop and strengthen the Red Army, General Tukhachevsky, deputy to the People's Commissar for War, declared on January 1, 1935, at the Seventh Congress of All-Russian Soviets:

"It goes without saying that the strength of the Red Army, which did not exceed 600,000 men during recent years, could no longer suffice for the defense of our frontiers. Consequently, the government decided to raise it to 940,000 men, and this figure was actually reached by the end of 1934.

"Our Red Army of workers and peasants is strong. Its political power and its revolutionary élan make it invincible; they impose on us the duty of waging the struggle and of using the resources of modern technique in such a way that there will be no army in the world that can be compared with it."

Poland, which feared being crushed between Germany and Russia, also strengthened its protective measures. On September 24, 1934, a decree of Marshal Pilsudski instituted auxiliary military service, to which all men aged seventeen to sixty were subject, as well as women who had completed a preparatory course.

England long hesitated before entering the path of rearmament. But the events of the Ethiopian War inflicted a stinging humiliation on it and awakened it from its torpor. Having too long believed that the League of Nations alone would suffice to maintain peace, it saw its interests compromised in the Far East, its imperial communications threatened in the Mediterranean, and suddenly discovered

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that its insular position in no way sheltered it from aerial aggression.

What a painful awakening! Whereas on January 29, 1934, the British government still believed it possible to reduce military aviation everywhere, on August 19 of the same year it announced its intention to double its air forces by building forty-two new squadrons. Under the principle of the one-power standard, Great Britain wanted its air fleet to be at least equal to the most powerful of those of its immediate neighbors.

But this was only a beginning. In the last days of February 1935, the English Cabinet published, under the name of a White Paper, a dossier containing disquieting revelations on England's weakness.

English opinion was stunned on learning the truth. "The White Paper," declared Lord Snowden, "is one of the most tragic documents of the postwar period," thus confirming Disraeli's jest: "An Englishman must be very moved to use the superlative."

On March 1, 1935, Mr. Baldwin submitted to Parliament a vast plan of land, naval, and air rearmament, for which he requested—and obtained—almost unlimited credits. "The greatest mistake committed after the war," declared the British Premier, "was to believe that it would establish the reign of democracy in the world—that the end of the war would make the world safe for democracy. A people

that is not resolved to take the most indispensable measures to defend itself will never possess on this earth any material or moral power.”

The small Powers saw themselves forced to follow the movement and imposed considerable sacrifices upon themselves to ensure their security. On December 6, 1934, Switzerland extended the duration of military service and voted a budget of 235 million Swiss francs, that is, 1,175 million French francs of the period. Romania renewed its war material and created new aircraft squadrons. On January 1, 1935,

[Retained footnotes]

3. A considerable figure, when one thinks that the total budget of the Swiss Confederation scarcely exceeds 400 million Swiss francs.

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Czechoslovakia established two-year service. Belgium prepared to take similar measures.

As for France, it had invested considerable sums in its fortified works and its equipment. The Maginot Line stretched its concrete shell all along the eastern frontier. But was this work of art sufficient to rule out every possibility of invasion? Some technicians affirmed that it was. Others doubted it.

In a book devoted to the Germanic Invasions, Ferdinand Lot demonstrated that the limes had powerfully contributed to weakening the morale of the Roman legions “by fixing those troops in a perpetually defensive attitude,” and pointed out that the Ancients too had yielded “to the fatal attraction of fine positions.” Taking up this argument, M. Tardieu in turn denounced the danger that lay in placing exclusive confidence in glacis and fortifications. “When the Roman Empire,” he wrote, “the greatest power of the ancient world, entrusted its defense to fortified works and neglected its field army, it very quickly became the prey of the barbarians.”

Nevertheless, France hesitated before the indispensable reforms that were required of it.

One man, however, stood up against the purely defensive conceptions that seemed to prevail within our General Staff: Commandant de Gaulle. For him, this manner of envisaging the future war was dangerously outdated. The next conflict would not be a war of position like that of 1914–1918. It would be a war of movement. Why? Because the machine capable of avoiding stagnation and reintroducing movement into the battlefield had been created: the tank.

[Retained footnotes]

1. In 1936, the Czechoslovak army comprised seven army corps, including twelve infantry divisions, two mountain infantry brigades, four cavalry brigades, and a certain number of motorized formations—that is, in all, 202,000 men.

3. *Le Populaire* of June 6, 1934 estimated the total of these expenditures at more than 10 billion francs, including the supplementary credit of 3 billion voted by the Chamber of Deputies on June 2, 1934, following an intervention by Marshal Pétain.

4. Ferdinand Lot, *Les Invasions germaniques*, vol. I, pp. 28–29. The author adds: “Other civilized empires committed the same error, and their stupidity was displayed on an even grander scale. The Chinese spent five centuries building the ‘Great Wall,’ which never saved them from a single invasion.”

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In a book entitled *Toward the Professional Army*, de Gaulle demonstrated, with implacable logic, that France could not rely, in order to bear the first shock, on a defensive system of ill-assured formations. It needed an offensive maneuver instrument, perpetually on alert and ready to deploy at any moment in its entirety.

The characteristics of this instrument would have to be: 1) speed; 2) broad autonomy; 3) as high a penetrating force as possible. What factor would give it these qualities? The motor. “The motor, which offers to carry what one wishes, where it is needed, at all speeds and distances; the motor which, if armored, possesses such firepower and shock power that the rhythm of combat accords with that of maneuvers.”

Tanks must therefore be built. On this point everyone agreed. But—and this is where the knot of the problem lay—instead of using them in small packets, as infantry-support machines, they had to be massed in large autonomous units, in armored divisions, which would be the breakthrough instrument capable of blowing apart the enemy’s system.

This revolutionary conception of the armored army, offensive and dynamic, was in every respect opposed to the static and defensive notions, borrowed from the last war, of those who advocated the construction of the Maginot Line. The reception given to it was therefore frankly unfavorable.

Certain politicians, such as Paul Reynaud, Philippe Serre, Marcel Déat, and Léo Lagrange, quickly grasped the interest of this new tank doctrine. But the military men, for the most part, were opposed to it.

France would therefore have neither an armored army nor motorized infantry. It would hold to the classic conception of the “fixed and continuous front,” inherited from Verdun and the Chemin des Dames. Yet a very grave problem was nonetheless posed: that of manpower. France was approaching the period of the “hollow classes”: the contingent called each year to the colors would fall for a time from 240,000 to 120,000 men. How was the Maginot Line to be “furnished” and the “continuity of the front” ensured at the same time?

[Retained footnotes]

1. In the spring of 1934.

2. These are the classes of 1934–1938, which mark, twenty years after 1914–1918, the years in which the birth rate declined because of the First World War.

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Only a return to two-year service could reestablish the equilibrium. The disadvantage of this measure was that it gave uninformed opinion the impression that France was doubling the volume of its army, whereas in reality it represented no increase in manpower: it merely made it possible to maintain them at their former level.

Yet this measure was imperative if France did not wish to be overtaken by the rearmament effort being imposed by its neighbors.

Marshal Pétain, whose influence was considerable because of the prestige attached to his name, then undertook a campaign of opinion to have this indispensable reform adopted. He raised the manpower question for the first time on July 3, 1934. On August 22, he took up the same theme in a lecture given at Saint-Malo before the Association of Reserve Officers. He returned to it on September 9, in a speech delivered at Meaux to commemorate the twentieth anniversary of the Battle of the Marne. Finally, on March 1, 1935, he issued a pressing appeal in favor of two-year service in an article published in the *Revue des Deux Mondes*.

On the same day (March 1, 1935), M. Pierre-Etienne Flandin laid before the Chamber of Deputies a bill relating to two-year service, intended to replace the provisions of the recruitment law of 1927. On March 16, after a lively debate that lasted fifteen days and brought into conflict the supporters of armored divisions and the supporters of the Maginot Line, Parliament finally adopted this bill, but with amendments that emphasized its limited and eminently transitory character:

I. The government is authorized to abolish the system of biannual incorporation, which avoids the harmful division between the two segments of the contingent.

II. The government is authorized to keep under the colors, for one additional year, the class incorporated in 1935, as well as the following classes, until 1939.

Such was the general atmosphere in which Hitler decided to reestablish compulsory military service in Germany.

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On March 15, he urgently gathered several members of his Cabinet to examine the situation with them. The next day, March 16—the very day on which France adopted two-year service—the Führer submitted to the Council of Ministers, this time assembled in full, the text of the Law on the Reconstruction of the Wehrmacht.

This law comprised only three paragraphs:

§ 1: Service in the Wehrmacht is based on compulsory military service.

§ 2: The German army comprises in peacetime 12 army corps and 36 divisions.

§ 3: The supplementary laws regulating compulsory military service will be submitted to the Cabinet within a short time by the Minister of the Reichswehr.

That same evening, all German newspapers reproduced the text of the law, as well as the accompanying proclamation of the Führer:

“As of today, the guarantee of the honor and security of the Reich is once more entrusted to the strength of the German nation.”

Tearing up everything that remained of Part V of the Treaty of Versailles and repudiating the obligations of the Geneva Pact—of which it had no longer been a part since October 14, 1933—the Reich regained its freedom of action at a stroke.

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XI

THE LAW OF MAY 21, 1935 AND THE CREATION OF THE NATIONAL ARMY

“March 16, 1935,” writes Paul Semmler, “is a capital date in the history of Germany. On that day the Führer broke the chains imposed on the Reich by the Treaty of Versailles and restored to the German people its honor and its freedom by promulgating the Law on the Reconstruction of the Wehrmacht.

“This reconstruction is based on general compulsory military service. It is therefore not at all a pure and simple restoration of the imperial military constitution, but something new. What Scharnhorst and Boyen had dreamed of, but had not been able to realize completely, is finally accomplished: a national army has been born, in the full meaning of the term.”

The last paragraph of the law of March 16 specified “that a complementary law would be submitted to the Cabinet within a short time by the Minister of the Reichswehr.” This was the law of May 21, 1935 relating to the national army, whose essential provisions we are going to examine, as we have already done for the law of March 6, 1919 on the provisional Reichswehr, and that of March 23, 1921 on the professional Reichswehr.

Each of these armies was the result of a political crisis. As if Germany’s creative genius found expression more quickly in this domain than in others, every shock, every upheaval, was translated into a refounding of the military institutions. To analyze the provisions of the law that modified them is therefore not simply to review a succession of abstract provisions;

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it is to rediscover, transposed onto the legislative plane, the political and social drama that Germany had just traversed.

The provisional Reichswehr was born from the dissolution of the imperial army and the two revolutions of November 1918 and February 1919; the professional Reichswehr was shaped by the Treaty of Versailles and by the Kapp putsch; the national Wehrmacht issued from the Hitlerian revolution and also, to a certain extent, from the crisis of June 30, 1934.

One might believe that these convulsions had produced armies very different from one another, having no kinship between them. Nothing would be more inaccurate, and it is here that a strange phenomenon intervenes that gives German history its particular physiognomy. While the nation was being ploughed up from top to bottom by social spasms and successively gave itself the most contradictory regimes—hereditary Empire, democratic Republic, or Dictatorship—the army underwent the aftershocks of these revolutions, but by harmonizing them with one another and softening their transitions, thus ensuring above civil discontinuity an unshakeable military continuity. Just as there had been no break between the imperial army and the provisional Reichswehr, nor between the provisional Reichswehr and the professional Reichswehr, there was no greater break between the professional Reichswehr and the national Wehrmacht. Each time that any group wanted to strike at this continuity—Liebknecht and the Spartacists in 1918, Röhm and certain SA leaders in 1934—it was crushed. Thus, from one army to the next, one finds a certain number of constants that may take on a new aspect but are never broken. This is what allowed one observer to launch the formula: “The Wehrmacht of 1935 is not only the crowning of the fifteen years of effort accomplished since the war; it is the outcome of two thousand years of military traditions, running from the ‘tribes in arms’ of primitive Germania to the ‘nation in arms’ of the contemporary age.”

The First Section of the law of May 21, 1935 concerns general provisions.

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Paragraph 1 begins by stating three fundamental principles. The first declares: Service with arms is a service of honor rendered to the German people. This phrase means that military service is not a tribute paid to society, but an honor of which each individual must strive to make himself worthy. The national community could not exist without the military community, and the latter, as symbol of the nation, is also the depositary of the honor of the State. Whoever forfeits honor cannot be part of the army and is automatically stripped of his military rights.

The second principle specifies that every German citizen has the duty to perform his military service. Although military service is in fact compulsory, the wording of this clause is intended to emphasize that this obligation flows from a duty, not from compulsion. From the fact that all German citizens are subject to the same historical destiny, they are invested with the same rights and the same duties. This principle suppresses the privileges granted before 1914 to the princes of the ruling dynasties, to the members of certain mediatized Houses, and to the sons of bourgeois families, who could perform only a one-year voluntary service. Under the new law, no derogation is any longer admitted.

The third principle affirms: In wartime, besides military service, every man and every woman is bound to participate in the defense of the Fatherland. This prescription rests on the National Socialist conception of the military community of the people and results from the evolution of modern wars, which will no longer be conflicts of armies, but conflicts of nations.

Paragraph 2 concerns the particular functions and the structure of the army. The Wehrmacht, one reads there, is the armed force and the school of military education of the German people.

[Retained footnotes]

2. It is a fairly widespread opinion in France that the idea of “total war” is of German origin and that its paternity belongs to Ludendorff. Nothing is more inaccurate. This conception, intimately linked to the evolution of modern nations, flows from the principles stated by the French Revolution. It was formulated for the first time by Brissot from the rostrum of the Convention. “It is necessary,” he said in his speech of February 6, 1793, “that the great family of the French be no longer anything but an army, that France be no longer anything but a camp where only war is spoken of, where everything tends toward war, where all labors have no object but war.”

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The term “Reichswehr,” instituted by the Weimar Constitution, was suppressed as having served to designate exclusively a professional army. “This designation,” declares Paul Semmler, “must be considered as henceforth belonging to the past.” Likewise, the name “Ministry of the Reichswehr” was replaced by that of “Reich Ministry of War.”

As armed force, the Wehrmacht must be constantly ready to defend the Fatherland against external enemies. As educator of the nation, its role consists not only in forming combatants practiced in the handling of arms, but citizens conscious of their duties toward the State. Military service crowns the cycle of civic education of every young German. It is the application of the principle stated by Hitler in *Mein Kampf*:

“The German army is not made to perpetuate the distinctive characteristics of the different Länder. It must be a school of adaptation and mutual understanding for all Germans. Whatever partitions may arise within the nation, the army has the mission of breaking them and transforming them into unifying forces. It must also bring the young man out of the narrow horizon of his province, in order to introduce him into the much wider circle of the nation. He must learn to see the frontiers of his fatherland, not those of his province, for it is they that he may one day be called upon to defend. It is absurd to let the young German stagnate in his native town instead of using his time of service to make him know Germany. The young Bavarian must at last see the Rhine and the North Sea; the Hamburgers must be shown the Alps and East Prussia. This is a principle we will maintain at any cost when the national army is reestablished.”

To this end, the system of *Landesmannschaften* instituted by the law of 1921, which reestablished in disguised form the four contingents of the imperial army, was definitively abolished. The Länder, stripped of their sovereignty by the law of January 30, 1934 *For the Reconstruction of the Reich*,

[Retained footnotes]

4. On this point, the law of May 21, 1935 comes close to the law of March 6, 1919.

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no longer had any say in military affairs and the administration of the army.

Paragraph 3 concerns the High Command. The Supreme Chief of the Wehrmacht is the Führer and

Chancellor of the Reich. He thus finds himself at the summit of the German military hierarchy, a position occupied before 1918 by Emperor Wilhelm II.

The soldiers, as we have seen above, are no longer sworn to the Constitution, but to the person of Adolf Hitler.

By virtue of Article 47 of the Weimar Constitution, the President of the Reich was also supreme chief of the army. But certain limitations were imposed on him. His right of command was nominal, not effective. He exercised it in peacetime, but not in wartime. Moreover, the orders he gave to the army were valid only after being countersigned either by the Minister of the Reichswehr, or by the Chancellor in the event that the Minister of the Reichswehr was in conflict with the President. (Article 50 of the Weimar Constitution.)

The Führer, by contrast, exercises supreme command in peacetime as in wartime; this command is both nominal and effective. Finally, his ordinances no longer need to be countersigned, since he is at once Supreme Chief of the State and Chancellor by virtue of the law of August 1, 1934. The Führer is invested with the six regalian rights that once belonged to the Emperor. But whereas the latter disposed of them fully only in the Prussian army, Hitler exercises them over the whole army of the Reich. These are: 1) the right of organization, which allows him to create new organs and troops, dissolve existing units, and build fortresses; 2) the right of promotion and appointment; 3) the right of inspection; 4) the right of dislocation, which allows him to modify the location of garrisons and the distribution of troops; 5) the right of mobilization; 6) the right of pardon.

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In addition to these powers, the Führer can proclaim a state of exception and use the army to repress internal disturbances, a right that the Emperor did not possess and that had been attributed to the President of the Reich by paragraph 48 of the Weimar Constitution. This is one of the only articles of the old Constitution that the new regime retained. But this right does not belong to Hitler as supreme chief of the Wehrmacht. It is a governmental prerogative that was conferred on him, as Führer of the Reich, by the law of August 1, 1934. It is, however, excluded that he would use it, for, according to National Socialist principles, the army must under no circumstances intervene in the internal affairs of the country. That role henceforth falls to the militarized police and the SS.

Under the orders of the Führer, the Reich Minister of War exercises command of the Wehrmacht, of which he is commander in chief.

Under the imperial regime, the command in chief was exercised by the Chief of the General Staff, whose functions were distinct from those of the Prussian Minister of War. Now these two functions were united in the hands of General von Blomberg, whose powers in military matters were limited only by the Führer, to whom he was responsible.

The Minister of War sits in the Reich Cabinet. His rights are equal to those of the other ministers. He represents the second level in the military hierarchy. As Commander in Chief of the Wehrmacht, he holds in his hand the "war trident," that is, the triple force of the army, the navy, and the air force.

The third level of the hierarchy is represented by the respective chiefs of each of these forces. General

von Fritsch, until then chief of the Heeresleitung at the Ministry of the Reichswehr, became Commander in Chief of the Army; General Göring, Commissioner and then Reich Minister for civil aviation, became Commander in Chief of the Air Force; Admiral Raeder, chief of the Marineamt at the Ministry of the Reichswehr,

[Retained footnotes]

3. These two bodies did not always agree. There was, moreover, a Ministry of War in Munich for Bavaria, one in Stuttgart for Württemberg, and one in Dresden for Saxony.

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became Commander in Chief of the Maritime Forces.

The Army comprises three Gruppenkommandos:

- I. Berlin (General von Rundstedt).
- II. Kassel (General Ritter von Leeb).
- III. Dresden (General von Bock).

The Gruppenkommandos are subdivided into twelve Wehrkreise, of which ten were constituted as early as 1935:

- I. Königsberg (General von Brauchitsch).
- II. Stettin (General Blaskowitz).
- III. Berlin (General von Witzleben).
- IV. Dresden (General List).
- V. Stuttgart (General Geyer).
- VI. Münster (General von Kluge).
- VII. Munich (General von Reichenau).
- VIII. Breslau (General von Kleist).
- IX. Kassel (General Dollmann).
- X. Hamburg (General Knochenhauer).

Each Wehrkreis comprises one army corps with three divisions. Each normal division comprises three infantry regiments with accompanying arms; two artillery regiments, one horse-drawn, the other motorized; a liaison and reconnaissance section; an engineer battalion partly motorized; a truck section; a pontoon section; a medical section.

But, AND THIS IS CAPITAL, the Army comprises—in addition to the classical-style formations that we have just enumerated—a certain number of armored divisions, or Panzerdivisionen, placed under the command of General Oswald Lutz. They are attached not to this or that infantry unit, but directly to the chiefs of the three Gruppenkommandos, that is, to Generals von Rundstedt, Ritter von Leeb, and von Bock. They therefore form a

[Retained footnotes]

1. It will be noted that the seats of the first seven Wehrkreise remained more or less identical to those of von Seeckt's Reichswehr. (See the foldout at the end of the volume.)

2. Apart from the second motorized artillery regiment, the structure of a Wehrmacht division corresponds exactly to that of a von Seeckt division. Only the strength and armament changed. Here—as with the Wehrkreise—one sees an example of the continuity of which we spoke at the beginning of this chapter.

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kind of independent and compact steel nucleus, a real “army within the army.”

What does this mean? Quite simply this: that the chiefs of the Heeresleitung, reflecting on their own account on the data of the future war, had arrived at the same conclusions as Commandant de Gaulle. They had recognized that the next conflict would not be a war of position, but a war of movement; that the essential factor of this mobility would be “the armored motor”; that tanks must therefore be massed in armored divisions and endowed with the necessary autonomy to enable them to intervene independently on the battlefield. For tanks, according to Guderian's fine phrase, are “the architects of victory.”

But going further than their French colleague, they had laid down as a principle:

1) That the Panzerdivisionen must draw the ordinary divisions in their wake; that the pace of the latter must therefore be accelerated, and that this acceleration could be obtained only by motorization, if not of all their units, at least of a sufficient number of them to allow them to pour into the breach opened by the tanks.

2) That the penetration force of the Panzerdivisionen must be increased by having them preceded by waves of bomber aircraft.

The great principle on which the new German strategy rests is therefore the close cooperation of armor and aviation.

As early as the summer of 1936, the Wehrmacht already had three armored divisions, distributed as follows:

I. Staff at Weimar (General von Weichs). Troops at the Ohrdruf camp, at Eisenach, in Saxony, and in Western Silesia.

[Retained footnotes]

1. On this score, the German military chiefs would attach only secondary importance to the construction of the Siegfried Line fortifications. They would see in them above all a feint intended to discourage a possible offensive intervention by the French army. They considered that the latter, constituted around a defensive principle, would be reluctant to leave the Maginot Line in order to come up against an opposing line of fortifications.

2. Reading Commandant de Gaulle's writings gives the impression of armored divisions maneuvering "in a vacuum," without troubling themselves unduly about their links with the rest of the army. Moreover, *Toward the Professional Army* contains no data on their formula of employment or on the role of aviation.

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II. Staff at Würzburg (General Guderian). Troops along the Saarbrücken–Beuthen autobahn.

III. Staff at Berlin (General Fessmann). Troops at the Wünsdorf and Zossen camps.

A fourth was being formed in Westphalia, in the Barmen-Elberfeld region.

Each armored division was in principle to comprise two armored regiments forming a brigade; one rifle regiment, mounted partly on motorcycles; one regiment of motorized artillery; one battalion of motorized pioneers; an intelligence section; and an antitank defense section. Each armored regiment had 250 armored vehicles, so that the number of tanks of each armored division, when these divisions had reached their final development, may be estimated at about 500.

Let us also note two cavalry divisions: one composed of two brigades stationed at Potsdam and Breslau; the other composed of an independent brigade stationed in East Prussia.

The Navy comprises the Central Command of the Fleet (Flottenkommando) at Kiel and two Station Commands:

I. The Baltic Station, at Kiel.

II. The North Sea Station, at Wilhelmshaven.

The Air Force, for its part, is divided into six Luftkreise:

I. Königsberg (General Schweickhard).

II. Berlin (General Kaupisch).

III. Dresden (General Wachenfeld).

IV. Münster (General Halm).

V. Munich (General Sperrle).

VI. Kiel (General Zander).

[Retained footnotes]

1. It was later claimed that the Germans had drawn inspiration from the ideas set out by de Gaulle in 1934. This is inaccurate, and a simple comparison of dates is enough to be convinced of it. General Guderian, questioned on this subject by the author of the present work, replied to him literally: "When General de Gaulle's book appeared in 1934, we had already been engaged on this path since 1932. Reading it interested us greatly, but it taught us nothing. At most it encouraged us to persevere in our efforts. Besides, the idea was in the air. After Fuller and Estienne, every lucid military chief had to come to it. The astonishing thing is not that de Gaulle thought of it, but that he was, it seems, the only one in France to do so, and that his ideas were so badly received there." (Statements collected in May

1941.)

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Each Luftkreis comprised, on April 1, 1936, three wings of 81 aircraft each and three antiaircraft defense regiments, but the flying material and the structure of the wings would subsequently undergo considerable modifications, as would the number and distribution of the Wehrkreise.

The Second Section of the law of May 31, 1935 concerns the conditions under which military service is performed.

Paragraph 4 declares: The duration of the military obligation extends, for every German, from the moment when his eighteenth year is completed until March 31 following the completion of his forty-fifth year. Conscripts are called to the colors in the year in which they have completed their twentieth birthday.

Clause 1 of paragraph 5 specifies that in case of mobilization each man must hold himself at the disposal of the Wehrmacht. The Minister of War will decide his assignment.

Clause 2 prescribes: In wartime, the needs of the army take precedence over all others, which means that all civilian bodies must, in case of conflict, submit to the requirements of National Defense.

Paragraph 7 is particularly interesting. The military duty, one reads there, is fulfilled by means of military service. This formula—somewhat nebulous in French, because it opposes two precise terms, Wehrpflicht and Wehrdienst, for which our language has no equivalents—deserves to be examined attentively, for it marks one of the essential differences that exist between the imperial army of 1914 and the national Wehrmacht of 1935.

In the imperial army, active officers and reengaged noncommissioned officers were not considered to be completing their “period of service.” They constituted a special class of “State functionaries” and served by virtue of a contract or a commission. “In their eyes,” writes Paul Semmler, “conscription was only a subsidiary measure

[Retained footnotes]

1. In 1936, two new Wehrkreise were created: Wehrkreis XI at Hanover and Wehrkreis XII at Wiesbaden. Finally, at the end of 1937, a thirteenth Wehrkreis, not provided for in the law, would be created at Nuremberg, obtained by splitting Wehrkreis VII (Munich) in two.

2. For East Prussia, separated from the rest of Germany by the Polish Corridor, the Minister of War extended the military obligations of the men of this province up to age fifty-five.

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intended to provide the cadres of the army with the human material they needed.” “Army” and

“contingent” formed two distinct groups, which never entirely amalgamated, and whose lack of homogeneity was one of the causes of the split that occurred in 1918.

This conception is abolished by paragraph 7 of the law. All members of the army, from the commander in chief to the simple soldier, serve by virtue of an identical principle: military duty toward the nation. What differentiates them is no longer their social origin, but the level of their respective capacities. Each German fulfills his “military duty” according to his rank. His rank alone confers on him different responsibilities and rights.

For us Frenchmen, this conception seems obvious, although at certain moments divergences appeared to emerge between “the army” and “the contingent.” For the Germans, by contrast, it was absolutely new and would contribute to modifying the spirit of the army. Relations between those of rank and the men of the ranks would become closer and more supple.

Paragraph 8 declares: The Führer and Chancellor of the Reich fixes by decree the duration of active service. A mere signature by the Führer is therefore enough to extend or shorten the duration of active service without any other authority having to ratify his decision. The mobilization of the nation can thus be carried out with maximum speed.

In the past, the imperial army and navy comprised a permanent army and a certain number of reserve formations that came to reinforce it when needed. Just as there was a watertight partition between the ranks and the troops, there was a gulf between the active army and the reserve. Now there is only a single “military duty,” which extends from 18 to 45 and is broken down into “active service” and “service on temporary leave.”

The following form part of active service:

- 1) Men called to the colors for the duration fixed by the Führer, by virtue of paragraph 8 of the law.
- 2) Officers and noncommissioned officers who voluntarily extend their period of service and become career soldiers.
- 3) Officers, noncommissioned officers, and men of the ranks on temporary leave,

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recalled to the colors for periods of training or maneuvers.

The following form part of service on temporary leave:

- 1) The reserve, for men under 35.
- 2) The auxiliary reserve (Ersatzreserve), for men not deprived of their military rights but exempted from active service.
- 3) The Landwehr, for men from 35 to 45.

After that age, the men are transferred to the territorial force (Landsturm).

Paragraph 13 enumerates the different cases of “military unworthiness.” Since service with arms is “a service of honor toward the German nation,” any man who has undergone an infamous conviction cannot be a soldier.

By virtue of paragraph 14, men recognized as physically unfit by the Medical Service and Catholic persons belonging to minor orders are exempted from military service. The law considers, in effect, that service with arms is incompatible with the obligations of the priesthood.

Paragraph 15 specifies that Aryan origin is necessary in order to form part of the army. This paragraph is based on the principle that Jews, not being German citizens, are not required to defend Germany with arms, since that country is not theirs. On this point they are assimilated to foreigners residing in Germany.

Marriage with a person of non-Aryan origin is forbidden to members of the Wehrmacht. Anyone contravening the law will be excluded from the army.

Paragraph 16 states the different cases in which the date of incorporation into the army may be delayed.

[Retained footnotes]

1. Paragraphs 9, 10, 11, and 12.

2. This paragraph has since been replaced by the so-called Nuremberg Laws, promulgated on September 15, 1935, and the law For the Protection of German Blood and Honor, of November 14, 1935.

3. Postponements may be granted to young men with family responsibilities; to sons of peasants or tradesmen whose parents are physically incapable of running their farm or business; to conscripts whose brothers were killed at the front or have more than 60% disability; to students in higher schools preparing examinations; to those learning a trade or an art whose progress would be seriously compromised by departure for service; to seminarians engaged in the study of theology, etc.

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Germans residing abroad are required to perform their service in the Wehrmacht even if they have already done so in a foreign army (§§ 17 and 18).

Paragraph 20 provides that the Minister of War may summon as he sees fit the members of the reserve, the auxiliary reserve, and the Landwehr, in order to maintain close contact between the members of active service and those of service on temporary leave.

Members of the Wehrmacht and of service on temporary leave are bound to secrecy on military matters for the whole duration of their service and even after its expiration (§ 25).

Soldiers must have no political activity. Their participation in the NSDAP or in one of the Party

organizations is suspended for the duration of their service. They do not vote and do not take part in referendums (§ 26).

Members of the Wehrmacht may not marry without the authorization of their superiors (§ 27).

Engagements contracted in the professional Reichswehr continue to be valid until they expire (§ 36).

The Führer has the right to promulgate the ordinances and provisions necessary for the application of the law. He may delegate his powers to the Ministers of War and of the Interior (§ 37).

This law enters into force on the day of its promulgation. As a result, the military law of March 23, 1921 is abolished (§ 38).

Also abolished were the prohibitions of the Treaty of Versailles relating to the Berlin War Academy.

On the morrow of victory, one of the first concerns of the Allies had been to close the doors of the Kriegsakademie, founded by Scharnhorst on October 15, 1810. If one of the principal objectives of the war had been "to suppress German militarism definitively," could one allow the institution that was its hearth to survive?

It was there that the most eminent strategists and the chiefs of staff of the Prussian army had been formed. From its ranks had come Moltke and Roon, Schlieffen and Waldersee, Hindenburg, Ludendorff, and Seeckt, to name only a few.

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Now, on October 15, 1935, the one hundred twenty-fifth anniversary of its formation, a crowd of officers in full dress pressed toward the gate of the barracks on Kruppstrasse. Two helmeted sentries rendered them honors. All these officers wore on their trousers the wide amaranth band used to designate General Staff graduates. Among them were a few uniforms of National Socialist leaders and a few civilians. According to their order of precedence or seniority, they all came to take their places in a large hall whose walls had as their only ornament full-length portraits of German generals.

It was a spectacle such as had not been seen since the War Council of Spa, where the abdication of Wilhelm II was decided. There were hundreds of general and senior officers there, among whom one recognized Marshal von Mackensen, Colonel-General von Seeckt, Colonels-General Heye and Hammerstein, former chiefs of the Heeresleitung, General Beck, General Keitel, all the chiefs of the services of the new Wehrmacht, and finally General von Liebmann, former Commander of Wehrkreis V.

The Führer-Chancellor made his entrance, followed by Colonel-General von Blomberg and the chiefs of the Army, Navy, and Air Force, General von Fritsch, Admiral Raeder, and General Göring, while in the courtyard Deutschland über alles and the Horst Wessel Lied rang out.

General von Liebmann thanked the Führer for having been willing to honor this memorable day with his presence. The room in which the ceremony took place was the hall of honor of the new Berlin War Academy, of which General von Liebmann had just been appointed director. Then General von

Blomberg, General Fritsch, and General von Seeckt spoke in turn and evoked “the glorious annals of the Great General Staff and of the War Academy, both forbidden by the Treaty of Versailles, but reestablished by the will of the Führer-Chancellor.”

[Retained footnotes]

2. Attached to the War Academy is the Wehrmacht-Akademie, directed by the former commander of Wehrkreis VII (Munich). This school trains assistant officers for the different services of the Heeresleitung.

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In less than three years—from the spring of 1933 to the autumn of 1935—the German army rose from about 100,000 men to nearly 650,000. How far one is from the army of 300,000 men proposed by Hitler to Mr. Eden in February 1934! But although the incorporations took place in successive batches, the influx of new recruits overturned the plans established by General von Seeckt. The reports submitted to the Minister of War by the various arms inspectorates all agreed in recognizing that the corps commanders were overwhelmed.

The following year, at the moment when the Wehrmacht was preparing to call to the colors the 464,000 men of the class of 1915, the army risked finding itself totally disorganized. To remedy the lack of cadres and pass more quickly through the critical period, Hitler promulgated on August 24, 1936, a decree raising the duration of active service to two years. Thus the class of 1914, the majority of whose recruits were already sufficiently trained to provide an important contingent of sergeants and corporals, would remain for another year in the barracks in order to accelerate the training of the class of 1915. As a result, the strength of the Wehrmacht was raised at one stroke to 1,210,000 men.

Then the generals became frightened. They, who had lived for ten years at the regular rhythm of the professional Reichswehr, could not adapt themselves to the frantic pace imposed on them by the Führer. Accustomed to carrying out methodical work, they were alarmed to see disorder entering their barracks. They had the impression of being submerged by the flood of conscripts and by the avalanche of new problems posed by their incorporation. In the hope of slowing Hitler down,

[Retained footnotes]

1. This figure includes neither the SA nor the SS, but only barracked formations.
2. Because of the spread of physical culture, the number of recruits judged fit for service by the medical boards is higher than before the war. In 1935, 83% of conscripts were found fit for armed service, against 76% in 1913. (Cf. Jacques Maufras, *La Revue hebdomadaire*, issue of May 9, 1936, p. 143.)
3. It is manifest that the organs of the Ministry of the Reichswehr had not expected such rapid reconstruction.
4. Class of 1914: 596,000 men; class of 1915: 464,000; cadres: 150,000 (assuming they had not increased). Total: 1,210,000 men.

they submitted to him alarming statistics on the state of barracks accommodation, the nonexistence of arsenals, the shortage of armaments, the insufficiency of cadres.

“Let us not go too fast,” they told him. “Such haste can only harm the solidity of the edifice!”

Then Hitler flew into a rage.

“I give you back an army and you dare complain of it?” he replied, striking them with his gaze. “That is the limit! It is you who should be demanding soldiers and weapons from me, harassing me night and day, pressing me to go faster! Instead of that, it is I who have to push you forward, for your own happiness! I have placed all the resources of the nation at your disposal; what more do you need? Tell me your needs, not your difficulties. Do you not understand that there is not a minute to lose? It is during the transition period that separates the institution of compulsory military service from the moment when the new army will be at full strength that we are most vulnerable! That is why this pass must be crossed as quickly as possible. If you are not capable of it, I will draw the consequences.”

To those who hinted to him that the people would not withstand such an effort, Hitler replied haughtily:

“The German nation withstood the great migrations, the Roman wars, the invasion of the Huns, that of the Tartars and the Mongols. It withstood the Thirty Years’ War, the wars of the Frederician period, those of Napoleon. It will very well put up with me too!”

The generals of the Wehrmacht did not need to be told twice. They knew that Hitler would assimilate any infringement of his orders to an act of treason. Since he did not wish to listen to them, all that remained for them was to be silent and return to work.

[Retained footnotes]

1. Hitler raised the income tax by 50%. From 1934 to 1939, 59% of the sums collected by the Treasury—that is, 60 billion marks—would be devoted to the Army. (Cf. *Lagebesprechungen*, p. 450, note 2.)

2. “The accelerated rhythm of rearmament during the years 1934–1938,” writes General Halder, “was imposed by Hitler, contrary to the opinion of the High Command. The latter never ceased to emphasize that the value of an army did not depend only on numbers, but on formation and training. These factors are obtained only at the price of slow and organic growth. Hitler imposed his dynamism, and several years later he still reproached the leaders of the Wehrmacht for having been forced to push them forward, for their own happiness.” (Franz Halder, *Hitler als Feldherr*, Munich, 1949, p. 9.)

And it is a fact that during the following months progress was astonishing. Constantly new units came to be added to those

already existing. Rifles, machine guns, cannon, tanks came out of the factories at an accelerated pace. The number of Wehrkreise was raised from 10 to 12. That of ordinary divisions went from 36 to 50, that of armored divisions from 3 to 6. At the end of 1937, a fourth Gruppenkommando could be created at Leipzig.

As early as the end of 1936, experts estimated that Germany would soon be in a position to put on foot, in case of war, an army of 13 million men, of whom 5 million could be mobilized in forty-eight hours. At that moment, the number of Wehrkreise being raised to 16, and each army corps giving birth to an army, it was with 16 autonomous armies that the Reich would enter a campaign. Each of the 50 divisions would become an army corps of 6 divisions, so that the German authorities evaluated at 300 divisions (against 240 in 1918) the maximum strength of the Wehrmacht after completion of general mobilization.

When one examines the Wehrmacht, what appears at first glance is the constant concern to avoid the errors of the past and to make maximum use of acquired experience. During the last ten years, the German generals had had time to meditate on the causes of their defeat and had tried to eliminate everything liable to cause its return. Through unity of command, realized in the hands of General von Blomberg, every risk of conflict was removed between the chief of the armies and the Minister of War. Through the suppression of the Landesmannschaften, every territorial compartmentalization between the contingents of the provinces was abolished. Through liaison with the national economy and the application of the "Four-Year Plan," all private industry was subordinated to the requirements of National Defense. Finally, through the law of April 19, 1936 For the Defense of the Patriotic Spirit,

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2. This figure corresponds to the 16 "Inspections" of the former imperial army.

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the Minister of War was endowed with an effective instrument against antimilitarist propaganda and subversive activities.

Thus it is no exaggeration to say that the Wehrmacht, forged for total war by a totalitarian regime, was called to become, within a few years, "one of the most powerful instruments of combat the world had known."

The imperial army was a class army; the provisional Reichswehr, a counterrevolutionary militia; the professional Reichswehr, a caste army. The Wehrmacht, for its part, was a national army, in the full meaning of the word.

It was the fourth German army since 1918.

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XII

THE BATTLE FOR LABOR

When Hitler came to power on January 30, 1933, the situation he inherited from the Weimar Republic was hardly enviable. From the social point of view, one may even say that it was catastrophic. More than six million unemployed were wandering across the country in search of work. It was impossible to cross the smallest German town without running into their idle masses. And the worst was that the economic slump left little hope of reclassifying them rapidly. The factories were running at reduced speed; no new building site was opening; plants were laying off their personnel. If this situation continued, there would soon be ten million unemployed. That is to say, one man in four would be reduced to misery. What would be left to all these unfortunate people except the prospect of slowly dying of hunger? By dint of seeing doors close before them, they had acquired the feeling of being excluded from the national community. How could they reintegrate themselves into it otherwise than by violence? Thus they fell into step behind the Communist agitators, who explained to them that their fate was the inevitable consequence of capitalism and that the only way out was to make Marxism triumph.

Now, at the moment when they were preparing to do so, Hitler and his brown shirts had forestalled them. They had seized power, and one of their first acts had consisted in turning

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1. The volume of allowances that would have to be paid to them represented such a burden on the budget that the government found itself obliged to limit payment of them to a period of six months. As a result, millions of workers had been without any resources for more than two years.

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against them. Auxiliary formations and Hilfspolizei threw their leaders into prison, smashed their trade-union organizations, and dismantled their parties. Every chance of establishing the dictatorship of the proletariat seemed eliminated for a long time.

What could they expect from their enemies? The National Socialist Party counted only few workers capable of pleading their cause with employers. It had mainly recruited its adherents among the middle classes, embittered by defeat and ruined by inflation: petty bourgeois, peasants, retired officers, shopkeepers, and civil servants. There was little reason to expect them to become defenders of the proletariat.

But precisely because the working class was outside the nation, the first task of the Party would consist in “recovering” it. It had to justify its name as the National Socialist German Workers’ Party. Not only because the adhesion of the working class was indispensable to the realization of its program, but because its conception of the unity of the nation would be only an empty phrase if it did not succeed.

Certainly this was not easy—and this was a point on which the leaders of the Party did not delude themselves. The problem to be solved was so enormous and so complex that it seemed to exceed human strength. It was impossible to overcome it by half-measures. If one wanted to conquer the evil, one had to seize it with both hands.

Hitler entrusted this crushing task to Dr. Ley, and he gave him a deadline of four years to carry it out.

This seemed like a wager. Many people smiled when they learned of this appointment, for even within the Party, Dr. Ley was considered more an amiable drunkard than a taskmaster. Yet this man, whom his close friends scarcely took seriously, would reveal himself from one day to the next as an organizer of high class. The work he would accomplish within the prescribed time would not only have the effect of giving the Party a broad popular base; it would stand beside the national army as one of the most spectacular achievements of the new regime.

Two weeks to the day had passed since

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1. National-Sozialistische Deutsche Arbeiter-Partei (NSDAP).

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the seizure of power when a law was promulgated on The Trustees of Labor. On this occasion, Dr. Ley delivered a great speech in which he proclaimed:

“Worker, I swear it to you! We will preserve for you not only everything you have already acquired, but we will increase your protection and your rights, so that every worker may feel himself a full member of the national community and be respected as such in the National Socialist State.”

These words inaugurated the great campaign “for the reconquest of the workers’ world,” whose objectives Hitler would define on May 10, 1933, before the National Congress of the Party:

“The greatest pride of my life,” he declared to his listeners, “will be to be able to say at the end of my days: I reconquered the German worker in order to reintegrate him into the German Reich.”

He announced that class struggle would be overcome by the creation of a new community spirit. He made known his will to put an end to the conflicts opposing the management of enterprises to their personnel by instituting in each establishment joint Management Committees, in which representatives of the management and delegates of the personnel would sit side by side. Thanks to these committees, they would gradually become conscious of forming not two hostile groups, but a united team associated in the accomplishment of the same work.

“It is only thus,” he affirmed in his peroration, “that one will awaken in millions of men the certainty that manual workers have the same rights as intellectual workers, that the State makes no distinction between employers and wage earners, and that the government is no longer in the service of this or that social category, but is the defender of the interests of the whole nation.”

“These are only words!” the skeptics told themselves. But they began to change their minds when they saw the new “Labor Authority,” which they were told was intimately linked to reactionaries, break the resistance of employers’ circles and impose on them a series of measures all tending to improve the worker’s conditions of life. Questions that until then had bogged down in endless debates without ever finding a solution

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1. Gesetz über die Treuhänder der Arbeit.

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were settled from one day to the next by way of ordinances. Paid holidays, payment for public holidays, and a complete revision of the wage scale were only the first stage. A new organization entitled “Beauty of Labor” obliged the heads of enterprises to improve hygiene in their workshops, build canteens and sports grounds, eliminate heaps of refuse and scrap iron in order to make room for green spaces, lawns, and gardens. A real offensive was launched throughout the country for the beautification of villages and workers’ estates, for an improvement of housing, and for a “humanization” of the lodging conditions of crews in the merchant marine. But one of the most striking aspects of this program was the appearance, in November 1933, of the organization called “Strength through Joy.”

“Few State organizations have been more maligned,” writes Peter Kleist, “and yet there are hardly any that achieved more complete success among those for whom it was intended.” It is important to emphasize this, not only because it is true, but because only the brilliant success of the “Labor Front” explains what otherwise would remain incomprehensible: the mass rallying of the working class to the new regime.

“It is impossible to attribute solely to the action of the Gestapo,” Dr. Kleist stresses, “the fact that the German workers accepted without revolt the disappearance of their old trade-union organizations; nor that the Communist Party

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2. This opinion is corroborated by certain statements made during the police investigation carried out after the attack perpetrated against Hitler on July 20, 1944. “The trade unionists say—and it is said of the trade unionists,” one reads in a report addressed by Kaltenbrunner to Martin Bormann on August 19, 1944, “that they generally ended by coming to terms with the National Socialist State. Men like Leuschner, Leber, and Maass were able, after their release from the concentration camp (1934), to rebuild a decent existence and work in their profession without seeking to resume political activity. No doubt they did not share the National Socialist ideology, but they considered many practical measures taken by National Socialism in favor of the workers to be valid. Goerdeler states that he asked Leuschner in 1940–1941 what the working class itself thought of it. To Goerdeler’s great disappointment, Leuschner assured him ‘that there existed among the workers no opposition to the National Socialist regime that might serve as an eventual basis for modifying or overthrowing the regime.’” (Spiegelbild einer Verschwörung, Secret Documents from the Archives of the former Reich Central Security Service, Seewald Verlag, Stuttgart, 1961, p. 264.)

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had taken refuge, from 1933 on, in such clandestinity that the German people perceived nothing of it

until 1945; nor that the Führer and his principal collaborators could hold innumerable meetings in factory halls, amid the applause of an audience as numerous as it was attentive.”

But neither “Strength through Joy,” nor “Beauty of Labor,” nor the creation of Works Councils, nor the development of Social Security measures would have had such an effect if they had not been accompanied by a massive absorption of unemployment. Rare were the observers—and still rarer the experts—who thought Hitler could overcome this difficulty, given the little help his Party could provide him. Many people were convinced that he would suffer, on the economic terrain, a disaster that would rapidly put an end to his career. It was thought that his utopian theories on “the abolition of the tyranny of the interest rate” would have no effect except to make capital flee and irremediably block the gears of the German economy. In short, a rapid burial was predicted for his Party.

Foreign countries shared this way of seeing. They were all the more disposed to grant Hitler the “four-year truce” that he had requested of the German people, since they thought his regime would not last four months. They were convinced that at the expiration of this period, the Chancellor would be at bay and ready for every bargaining.

But the expected reversal did not occur. Hitler wanted to replace the notions of capital and profitability with those of labor and productivity. Dr. Schacht supplied him with the means by adapting to these principles his narrow budgetary margins. He managed it by boldly mortgaging the future, that is, by considering as already acquired the increases in resources that would result from the restarting of the economy.

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1. In the course of the year 1937, 34 million persons attended the recreational sessions organized by the “Labor Front”; 6,500,000 workers took an active part in the sports competitions organized by the Party; 4,000 concerts and 3,000 evenings were offered free of charge to workers engaged in the construction of the autobahns. (Cf. Peter Kleist, *Auch Du warst dabei*, p. 78.)

2. Many members of the NSDAP were themselves struck by the crisis and were therefore incapable of offering employment.

3. Borrowed in 1921 from Gottfried Feder.

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On June 1, 1933, the struggle for labor received a new impetus through the promulgation of the Law for the Absorption of Unemployment. It was followed, within a short time, by a series of decrees concerning the creation of “Emergency Works,” Treasury advances to “Labor Sites,” tax exemptions for works of public interest, honor loans granted to young married couples, advances granted to indebted peasants, and public collections “For the Development of National Labor.” A plan of unprecedented scale was set in motion, involving the construction of a first tranche of 200,000 workers’ houses and a network of 7,000 kilometers of autobahns, of which 2,000 were immediately put under construction. On September 23, 1933, Hitler himself gave the inaugural pickaxe blow. On May 19, 1935, the first Frankfurt–Darmstadt section was opened to traffic, to the applause of a crowd of 600,000 spectators. At the end of 1936, 1,000 kilometers had been completed.

Hitler accelerated the movement still further by creating a General Council of the Economy, whose members he charged with drawing up an economic recovery plan for the whole Reich. Then he profoundly modified the fiscal system. Finally, he set up a "Four-Year Plan," whose execution he entrusted to Göring. The struggle for labor intensified and soon took on the aspect of a real battle.

Caught under this rolling fire of decrees and ordinances, the hydra of unemployment finally retreated. The number of unemployed, which was 6,200,000 in January 1933, fell to 4,100,000 in January 1934, to 2,700,000 in January 1935, to 1,500,000 in January 1937, before finally reaching its lowest ebb: 350,000 in July of the same year. The gray tide withdrew, and in the space left free by its reflux one saw new villages arise, roads lengthen, factories fill, and twenty million men regain a taste for life.

It will be objected that the absorption of unemployment was facilitated by the reestablishment of compulsory military service. It contributed to it, indeed, but only in a proportion of 15 to 17%. It will also be objected that the economic recovery coincided with the end of the world crisis and that it was favored by the arms race. No doubt. But the war industry alone would never have sufficed to absorb such a mass of

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Increase and absorption of unemployment
from 1923 to 1939.
(in millions of unemployed)

[Chart page: title only preserved from text layer.]

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unemployed. Proof of this is furnished by hiring statistics. They indicate that the sectors where the increase was strongest were road construction, housing construction, and workers' estates; the reclamation of marshy regions; and finally the textile and automobile industries. Even the fact that real wages increased only slightly, and that this increase especially benefited certain professional groups, in no way diminishes the importance of the result, for the issue was not so much to remedy a financial crisis as to solve a certain number of social and human problems. What the workers were grateful to Hitler for was not only that he had restored to them means of existence, but that he had made them benefit from a social promotion that conferred on them, within the German community, an importance and a dignity that they did not previously possess.

To reintegrate the worker into the nation: such was the aim of the different measures we have just examined. To make the entire nation pass through the school of labor: such would be the objective of the Arbeitsdienst, instituted by the law of June 26, 1935.

Article 1 of this law states the four fundamental principles on which the Labor Service is founded:

§ 1: The Reich Labor Service is a service of honor rendered to the German people.

§ 2: All young Germans of both sexes must serve their people in the Labor Service.

§ 3: In accordance with the National Socialist spirit, the Labor Service must inculcate in German youth the sense of the national community and the new conception of labor, based on the respect due to manual labor.

§ 4: The Reich Labor Service must carry out exclusively works of public utility.

If paragraph 1 of the law of June 26, 1935 proclaims that the “Labor Service is a service of honor rendered to the German people,” it is not simply in order to repeat the first clause of the military law.

[Retained footnotes]

1. “Service with arms is a service of honor toward the German people.” (Law of May 21, 1935.)

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It is in order to underline the close parallelism that exists between the two principles on which the strength of the nation is built: combat and labor.

“For us,” declares M. Hierl, head of the Labor Service at the Nuremberg Congress of 1933, “labor is the very essence of life. In our eyes, labor is the brother of struggle.”

The bourgeois liberalism of the nineteenth century had seen labor as a necessary evil, a curse inherent in the human condition. The aim of existence being to accumulate wealth, labor and the worker himself had become simple commodities. Thus were born the two scourges of the modern world: the pauperization of the masses and the exploitation of workers.

The Labor Service has the aim of inculcating in German youth an entirely different conception. Radically dissociated from the notion of profit, labor is exalted as an intrinsic value. It is no longer a necessary evil, but an immense potential of energy capable of beautifying life, provided it is placed at the service of the collectivity. To serve the nation by the tool is no less noble than to serve it by thought or by arms. If the Wehrmacht has as its object the militarization of the people, the Labor Service has as its object its socialization.

“The young people assembled in the labor camps,” writes Müller-Brandenburg, “must lead there a common life, cemented by participation in common works. The future officer, the future judge, the future employer live there side by side with the locksmith, the agricultural worker, the boatman, the navvy, the textile worker, etc. They eat together, lodge together, and thus learn to know one another thoroughly in work, through work, and in the evening gatherings they spend together with their leaders. The hour then comes when these young people realize that the ideas of ‘bourgeoisie’ and ‘proletariat’ are in the end only constructions of the mind and that all form part of a single people.”

By virtue of paragraph 2 of the law, all German youth must pass through the Labor Service, and in fact all young men who have reached twenty years of age perform

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2. Passage through this organization, at first voluntary, became compulsory from June 26, 1935.

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this service since October 1, 1935. No young man may be admitted to the University, nor exercise a public function, if he has not first completed his period in the Labor Service. Moreover, paragraph 8 of the military law specifies that “passage through the Arbeitsdienst is indispensable for entering the Wehrmacht.” One must have served the nation with the tool before being admitted to serve it with arms.

The duration of service in the Arbeitsdienst is fixed at six months. Each class is called up in two contingents: the first during the summer semester, the second during the winter semester. But the call-ups do not take place according to dates of birth. In summer, preference is given to young men from the cities and industrial districts, who are sent into the fields. The winter contingent chiefly comprises young men from the countryside and seasonal workers, who are sent into the cities.

Whereas members of the Hitler Youth, or members of the S.A., reside with their families, the men of the Labor Service live for six months on work sites and in camps. Each camp is, in general, at the strength of a company with its usual subdivisions and, except for the camp commander, most of the NCOs are chosen from among the recruits.

The men of the Labor Service are dressed in a reseda-green uniform. They have neither helmet nor weapons, but are provided with a spade, which they learn to handle like a rifle and with which they render honors. Their flag reproduces, on a red ground, the insignia they wear on the left arm: a shovel surrounded by two ears of wheat.

Their activity in the camps is divided between manual labor and military instruction. The members of the Arbeitsdienst perform each day six hours of unpaid manual labor, alternating with two hours devoted to sport, courses in “political education,” and military instruction.

No doubt this instruction still has only a rudimentary character (school of the soldier, basic elements of rifle and grenade firing instruction, individual instruction preparatory to combat). But it constitutes much more than the “pre-military training” as practiced in other countries.

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“The man whose physical vigor is developed by daily labor,” writes L’Europe nouvelle, “thereby acquires a technical and tactical instruction to which a discipline in every respect conforming to that used in the army adds a strong moral preparation; these are qualities that bear fruit on the day when the man is incorporated into a fighting unit.”

Finally paragraph 4 of the law of June 26, 1935 specifies that “the Reich Labor Service must be assigned exclusively to the execution of works of public utility.” It is formally forbidden to place its

members at the service of a private interest. That would run contrary to the aim pursued.

The first sections of the Arbeitsdienst made their appearance at the Party Congress of 1933. In September 1934, 32,000 of them marched past the Führer. In 1935, they numbered 400,000. But their triumph was marked by the Congress of 1937, which bore the significant name of “Congress of Labor.”

For the first time, the diplomatic representatives of Italy, Japan, Hungary, and other friendly countries attended the ceremony. Sir Neville Henderson had accepted the invitation of the Party. The ambassador of France, M. François-Poncet, who until then had been very reserved, had decided to come as well, thereby showing the way to the other diplomatic missions.

When the 40,000 young men of the Labor Service entered the arena singing, spade on shoulder, torso bare and bronzed by the sun, a wave of enthusiasm made the crowd massed in the stands undulate. A command rang out: they presented their tools. And those 40,000 spades, handled as if by a single man, filled the enclosure of the Congress with an immense glittering.

Even the foreign observers were overwhelmed. Although they could not explain their emotion, they could not prevent tears from rising to their eyes. They felt instinctively that what was being expressed here was something quite other than “Prussian-style” discipline, for no order, no constraint, would be capable of organizing a spectacle of such beauty. What shone on the faces of those 40,000 young men was the joy of giving themselves wholly to a task that surpassed them. It was an ardor so pure that it communicated itself to the spectators.

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For his part, Sir Neville Henderson made no attempt to conceal his admiration.

— On my return to London, he declared to the S.A. officer charged with escorting him, I shall do everything possible to introduce an equivalent of the Arbeitsdienst in England...

So strong was the impression this spectacle left on him that the ambassador of Great Britain would not hesitate to write, in the report he devoted three years later to the circumstances that ended his mission in Germany: “The Strength through Joy movement, the care taken over the physical education of the nation and, above all, the organization of the Labor Service are typical examples of what a benevolent dictatorship can accomplish... It would be idle to deny the importance of what has been done by the man who restored to the German people their self-respect and a disciplined order.”

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XIII

THE REICH WINS TWO SUCCESSES

THE RETURN OF THE SAAR

THE ANGLO-GERMAN NAVAL AGREEMENT

The Hitler regime had fought four battles, and it had won them: against the political parties, against the revolt of the S.A. chiefs, against the military clauses of the Treaty of Versailles, and finally against

unemployment.

But in evoking the Congress of 1937, we have somewhat upset the chronological order. We must now retrace our steps, for two important events had taken place in the interval.

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The first — the Saar plebiscite — came onto the political calendar on January 13, 1935.

The makers of the Treaty of Versailles, who had detached this territory from Germany, had nevertheless not wished to tear it away definitively. They had stipulated that at the end of fifteen years, the Saarlanders would be called upon to say, by way of plebiscite, whether they preferred to remain autonomous, to be attached to France, or to return to the Reich.

During the debates of the Paris Conference, Clemenceau had never ceased affirming that the great majority of the Saarlanders were French by origin, and that those who were not were French at heart. Moreover, representatives of our heavy industry constantly reminded him that the Saar is rich in minerals that are the natural complement of our Lorraine basin. Thus he would have liked to settle the question immediately. But Lloyd George had refused.

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— Since you are so certain of the Saarlanders' sympathy, he had replied to him, what do you lose by waiting? They will be all the more ardent in opting for France since none of them will be able to say that his hand was forced...

After having returned several times to the charge, Clemenceau had yielded, and the date of the plebiscite had been fixed at 1935.

Now the prescribed fifteen years have elapsed, and the Saarlanders are going to be invited to pronounce on their destiny. The stake is much greater than the small size of the territory would suggest, with its some 2,500 square kilometers and its 812,000 inhabitants. For France, as for Germany, the Saar consultation has the value of a test.

If France wins, she will not merely derive certain economic advantages from it; the moral advantages will be greater still. Not only will Clemenceau's assertions be confirmed, but this vote will demonstrate that democratic France exercises more attraction over minds than Hitlerian totalitarianism. In the opposite case, France will suffer a failure all the more humiliating because, during the fifteen years that have passed, the French government has had all the cards in its hand. French officials have administered the country. Customs tariffs were almost abolished at the Franco-Saar frontier, so that all the riches of the country flowed toward Lorraine, bringing an appreciable stimulus to our iron and steel industry. Finally, French propaganda was able to operate freely. Day after day, the newspapers of Paris and abroad had every latitude to enlighten minds on the dark background of the Hitler regime. Nothing was left in shadow: neither the persecution of the Jews, nor the concentration camps, nor the revolt of the S.A., nor the obstacles placed before freedom of expression.

The head of the Third Reich was openly accused of gagging the opposition, of rigging his plebiscites,

of subjecting the country to a regime of terror. And now the population of a territory that escaped his control, and where his propaganda reached only through the intermediary of radio, was going to be called upon to say whether it preferred to be free, to attach itself to France, or to return to the bosom of the Reich. Who does not see that its choice will amount to a verdict, and that it is not Germany, but the Hitler regime, that will be put on trial?

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As one sees, the stakes were high, and France, conscious of this, tried to put all the cards on her side. The pro-German movements were dissolved. Anti-National Socialist émigrés were charged with making lecture tours not only in Saarbrücken, but even in the smallest villages, to explain to people what they would expose themselves to if they voted for Berlin.

On the German side, one did not remain inactive either. A “German Front” had been formed under the direction of Landesleiter Pirro. The almost immediate success it obtained among the population worried Paris. Minds grew heated; the fever rose as the date of the plebiscite approached. Toward the end of November, the French government, fearing that disturbances would break out, massed troops on the Franco-Saar frontier. The situation was as tense as on the eve of the occupation of the Ruhr. The “German Front” gave its members the order to avoid provocations and to show the most perfect discipline. M. Bürckel, appointed by Hitler as Reich plenipotentiary for Saar affairs, forbade all activity by the S.A. and S.S., including the wearing of the uniform, in a zone 40 kilometers wide outside the German-Saar frontier. For the Saar had become a real powder magazine; a spark would have been enough to make it explode.

Hitler then handed the French ambassador in Berlin a note proposing to settle the conflict by an amicable agreement between the two governments. By common agreement, France and Germany would renounce the plebiscite in order to avoid the unleashing of passions it might provoke. The Saar would become German again, but an economic treaty would allow French industry to benefit from Saar resources under the same conditions as before.

The French government declined this proposal, which it interpreted as an admission of impotence. Would Hitler renounce the plebiscite if he were sure of winning it? Thus it was less than ever the moment to make concessions to him...

As a result, the tension worsened. The French authorities intervened on various occasions to disperse demonstrations by the “German Front.” Five times the German government sent notes to the League of Nations to protest against “these violations of neutrality.” Finally, to prevent the situation from deteriorating further,

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the League of Nations decided to take the affair in hand. It sent into the Saar an international police force, intended to ensure control of the plebiscite. As a result, the passions calmed; the fever fell. The popular consultation could take place without incident.

The results became known in the night of January 13 to 14, 1935. 90.8% of the voters chose attachment to Germany; 8.8% voted for the maintenance of the status quo; only 0.4% opted for attachment to France.

In Paris, where success had been expected, the results of the ballot were a terrible disappointment. What had become of the 150,000 French Saarlanders evoked by Clemenceau? The English, who had considered the Germans the winners, congratulated themselves on their prudence.

In Berlin, the Saarlanders' decision aroused indescribable enthusiasm. The crowd marched for hours beneath the balcony of the Chancellery, acclaiming the Führer. The figures of the plebiscite, carried out under international control, were identical to those of the plebiscites that had previously taken place inside the Reich. This was therefore proof that they had not been rigged.

But there was more: the return of the Saar was an indication heavy with meaning. The attraction of the Reich had proved stronger than all opposing propagandas. As soon as a German population, separated from the Reich by a decision of the victors, was able to express itself freely, it manifested its will to rejoin its original homeland. That was a lesson Berlin would not forget...

On March 1, 1935, the administration of the Saar was officially handed over to the German authorities. Hitler took advantage of the occasion to declare, in a speech to the Reichstag, "that Germany solemnly renounces any claim on Alsace-Lorraine and that after the return of the Saar, the Franco-German frontier may be considered definitively fixed."

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Barely six months after the Saar plebiscite, Germany won a new success.

The result of the Saar plebiscite had deeply impressed the English. They told themselves that the Führer's position was decidedly stronger than had been believed, and that it was vain to speculate every day on his fall.

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Moreover, the British had always regretted the abruptness with which Barthou had practically put an end to their efforts to reach a general agreement on disarmament. What a pity that France had rejected the MacDonald plan! By clinging to the remnants of the Treaty of Versailles, the French government had arrived at a disastrous result: instead of granting Germany equality of rights, it had allowed her to rearm without control or limit. That the Reich had profited from this to increase its land forces considerably was already worrying. But if it did the same in the naval domain, it would be still more serious. For England counted only on its fleet and its aviation to ensure its security.

Now, in this domain too, Germany seemed to want to go forward. On April 15, 1935, the Reich government officially communicated to the foreign naval attachés the main lines of its program for 1935–1936. It included the construction of the following units:

1. two ships of the line of 26,000 tons (on the stocks for several months);
2. two heavy cruisers of 10,000 tons;

3. destroyers;
4. about twenty submarines, several of which were already under construction.

Among these vessels, the heavy cruisers of 10,000 tons, which the German Admiralty called “pocket battleships,” particularly attracted the attention of the English. According to Admiral Raeder’s formula, their characteristic was to be “more powerful than the fastest cruiser, but faster than the most powerful battleship.” With their 280-mm guns, their 100-millimeter armor, and their speed of 26 knots, they commanded the admiration of connoisseurs. To let Germany engage freely in this course would be to expose England to grave danger. But how impose any limitation on her, now that all negotiations had been broken off at Geneva?

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That was the question the British leaders were asking themselves when, on May 21, 1935, Hitler delivered a great speech to the Reichstag, which was going to offer one last chance for negotiation. After having cited Lord Robert Cecil and Paul-Boncour, the Chancellor formulated a program in thirteen points, which defined the position of the German government in matters of disarmament:

1. The German government regrets the position taken at Geneva on March 17, 1934. It considers it indispensable to establish a very clear separation between the Treaty of Versailles, based on a distinction between victors and vanquished, and the League of Nations, all of whose members must be invested with equal rights in all domains of international life.
2. Following the refusal to disarm manifested by the other States, the German government has freed itself from the articles of the Treaty that represented for the German nation a discrimination of unlimited duration. The German government nevertheless declares, in solemn fashion... that it will respect the articles concerning the life in common of nations, including territorial prescriptions, and will carry out inevitable revisions only by means of peaceful negotiations with the countries concerned.
3. The German government will sign no treaty that seems to it impossible to execute, but it will execute every treaty freely signed, even if it was concluded before its accession to power...
4. The German government is ready at all times to participate in a system of collective cooperation having as its aim the safeguarding of European peace.
5. The German government considers that the organization of European cooperation cannot be carried out within the framework of conditions unilaterally granted...
6. The German government is ready, in principle, to conclude pacts of non-aggression with each of the neighboring States...

[Retained footnotes]

1. Broadcast declaration of Lord Robert Cecil, December 29, 1930: “International disarmament corresponds to our most obvious national interests. We have affirmed not once, but on various occasions, the obligation for the nations that emerged victorious from the world war to reduce and limit their own armaments, correlatively to the disarmament that we made a duty for our former enemies. We

would destroy all confidence in international obligations if we did not keep the promise that we made.”

2. Declaration of M. Paul-Boncour, published in Le Journal of April 26, 1930: “There is no need to be a prophet; one need only have one’s eyes open to perceive that in the event of final failure of the work of the Disarmament Conference, or even simply of its indefinite adjournment, Germany, freed from the other constraints, will shake this one off as well, and will no longer accept being the only one to undergo armament limitations that the Treaty itself specified as being the condition, and also the promise, of a general reduction.”

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7. The German government is ready, in order to complete the Pact of Locarno, to adhere to an air convention and to discuss its clauses.

8. The German government has made known the level to which it intends to bring the new German army. It will not depart from it under any circumstances... It is ready at any moment to impose on itself, in its armaments, the limitations that the other States would also accept...

As regards naval armaments, the limitation of the German navy to 35% of the English fleet represents a proportion still 15% lower than the total displacement of the French fleet. Since one has been able to read in various press commentaries that this claim was only a beginning and that it would inevitably swell with the possession of colonies, the German government wishes formally to declare that the fixing of this level has a definitive character.

Germany has neither the intention nor the means of launching herself into a new naval armaments race. Moreover she feels no need for it. The German government spontaneously recognizes the vital importance and the legitimacy of the naval preponderance of the British Empire, just as it is determined to do everything necessary to ensure the protection of its own existence and freedom on the continent. The German government intends to do everything to establish and maintain with the United Kingdom relations of a nature to prevent forever, between these two peoples, the return of a struggle like that of 1914–1918, the only one thus far that has seen them at grips.

[Retained footnotes]

9. The German government is ready to participate actively in all efforts attempted with a view to a practical limitation of armaments. It considers that the best means of achieving this is to return to the principles of the old Geneva Red Cross Convention. 10. The German government is ready to approve any limitation having as its aim the suppression of heavy weapons of an offensive character (heavy artillery and tanks). Given the formidable fortifications erected by France along her frontiers, such suppression would automatically ensure France absolute security.

1. “Germany will never wage war on England, nor on Italy, nor on Japan,” Hitler had said previously. “Provided the English leave my hands free in Central Europe, I see no drawback to their retaining mastery of the seas.”

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11. Germany declares herself ready to approve any limitation of the calibers of the artillery of ships of the line, cruisers, and torpedo boats. Likewise, the German government declares itself ready to accept any international limitation of the displacement of ships. Finally, the German government is ready to accept the limitation of the displacement of torpedo boats, and even their complete suppression, in the event of an international settlement equal for all Powers.

12. The German government is convinced that no détente in international relations can be obtained so long as the necessary measures have not been taken to prevent public opinion among peoples from being poisoned by speeches, writings, films, or plays of tendentious character.

13. The German government is always ready to associate itself with an international agreement aimed at stopping or preventing every attempt at interference in the internal affairs of any State whatever. It is still entitled to demand that such a regulation be international and apply to all States... It is also important that the notion of interference be rigorously defined.

After having set forth the thirteen points of this program, Hitler concluded in these terms:

— I could not better conclude the speech I have just delivered than by renewing our profession of faith in favor of peace... Whoever brandishes the torch of war in Europe can desire only chaos!

But France refused to resume negotiations on these bases. She remained faithful to the status quo and to collective security, “without noticing,” as Lord Tyrrell would say, “that she was wearing mourning for a shadow.”

In London, Hitler’s speech was much better received. Paragraph 8 in particular, concerning the limitation of the German war navy to 35% of the British fleet, had been read attentively. On May 22, the editorialist of *The Times* did not hesitate to write: “No unprejudiced mind can doubt the fact that Hitler’s thirteen points could serve as a basis for a final settlement of our relations with Germany.”

The English governing circles considered, in effect, that

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platonic condemnations of German rearmament were not enough to suppress its existence and that it would be wiser to resume talks in one form or another, rather than to remain entrenched in sulking hostility.

Thus the British government decided to seize the hand extended to it. On May 25, it invited the German government to begin bilateral conversations on naval rearmament. Hitler accepted at once. He sent to London Joachim von Ribbentrop, his personal adviser on questions of rearmament, whom he had raised to the rank of ambassador extraordinary.

Despite the favorable atmosphere reigning in Downing Street, Ribbentrop’s task was far from easy. It was made still more difficult by the instructions Hitler gave him before his departure:

— Tell the English that my offer to limit the German fleet to 35% of the global tonnage of the British fleet is a single and irrevocable proposal, which I shall not renew. It can in no case serve as a basis for bargaining. If the English imagine that they will bring me to reduce this proportion to 33 or 25%, after having pulled on the rope for several years, they are mistaken. The 35% is not a final objective. Its acceptance is the preliminary condition for any negotiation.

Ribbentrop was neither a diplomat of the old school nor a skilful dialectician. Each of his words betrayed his incredible vanity. And not only his words, but his carriage of the head, his gestures, and even his intonation. Although he was of good family, he had the conceit of a parvenu, which his elevation to the dignity of ambassador extraordinary had further aggravated. But even for a man as self-satisfied as he, Hitler's instructions seemed a little abrupt, and it was not without a certain apprehension that he prepared for the first great mission of his life.

Now, at the moment when he was about to leave his office, he received a confidential report from the Japanese military attaché in London, Captain Arata Oka. "By dint of negotiating with the English on questions of naval rearmament," he wrote to him, "we have acquired a certain experience in this field. Never forget that the English are the most cunning people on earth and that they are past masters in the art of negotiation as in that of handling the press and public opinion... State your conditions from the outset and do not budge from them, otherwise the experts of the Admiralty will drag you into endless discussions in the course of which you will end by losing your footing..."

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This advice seemed wise. Ribbentrop was all the more disposed to conform to it because it did not contradict the instructions of his chief and suited his unnuanced character marvelously. As soon as he arrived in London, on June 4, 1935, he went to Downing Street, entered the office of the Foreign Secretary, and declared to him point-blank:

— Our conditions are to be taken or left. If His Majesty's government is not disposed to accept them, it is useless to continue the conversations. This point must be settled before going any further.

Sir John Simon started at this ultimatum.

— This is inadmissible! he cried, his face flushed with anger. One does not throw one's conditions on the table in this way before even beginning negotiations!

Whereupon he left the room without even taking leave of his interlocutor, leaving to an usher the care of showing him out. That very evening, the whole ministry knew of the scandalous scene.

The German delegation was consternated. It waited with apprehension for the course of events and — knowing neither Hitler's instructions nor Arata's report — wondered whether Ribbentrop had not compromised everything by his lack of tact.

But precisely this abruptness was going to bear unexpected fruit. During the night the English reflected. Stupefied by the insolence of the German ambassador, they told themselves that he would never have dared adopt such language if the Reich really cared about the success of the negotiation. Was this not proof that Hitler had no desire to tie his own hands, that he was preparing to go ahead regardless? Thus

the English told themselves that it was urgent to reach a result.

From the next day they invited Ribbentrop to resume the talks. This time the meeting did not take place at the Foreign Office, but in the Council Room of the Admiralty, whose decoration recalled the splendors of three centuries of British naval hegemony.

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At one end of the room, paneled in eighteenth-century woodwork, one saw a large compass rose connected to a weather vane, which had allowed the lords of the Admiralty to draw up their battle plans in the time of sailing ships. A little farther on, a notch cut into an oak panel indicated Nelson's exact height. Nothing seemed to have changed since Aboukir and Trafalgar, except the comfortable red-leather armchairs arranged around the table.

The welcome of the English was most friendly. The British delegation consisted of Sir Robert Craigie, Admiral Little, and Commander Dankwerts. Germany was represented by Ribbentrop, Admiral Schuster, Lieutenant Commander Kiderlen, Embassy Counselor Woermann, Commander Wassmer, naval attaché in London, and Legation Counselor Erich Kordt.

From the beginning of the meeting, Sir Robert Craigie, permanent under-secretary of State at the Foreign Office, read a short declaration. To the greatest surprise of the Reich delegates, it was a pure and simple acceptance of the German conditions.

On June 7, the English government informed its allies of the opening of negotiations, while taking care to warn them that "the German offer must be accepted, for it brings an essential contribution to the problem of future naval limitations and constitutes an important assurance for the security of Great Britain and the other countries."

France could make the most explicit reservations "on the value of bilateral conversations pursued apart from the Geneva Conference"; nevertheless, in less than ten days, Sir Robert Craigie and Admiral Little, on the English side, Admiral Schuster and Commander Wassmer, on the German side, had studied and resolved the delicate and tangled problems relating to categories of ships, tonnage, firepower, speed, and construction deadlines. On June 18 — the anniversary of Waterloo — an agreement was signed between the Reich and Great Britain, under the terms of which German naval rearmament was officially recognized.

Immediately after the signature of the agreement, Ribbentrop, wishing to profit from the general euphoria, tried to broaden the negotiation by laying the groundwork for an Anglo-German alliance:

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— The Führer has not concealed from me, he declared, that he is ready to guarantee the territorial integrity of Holland, Belgium, and France within the framework of a general understanding with the United Kingdom. In addition, he is disposed to place twelve divisions at the disposal of England, to help her defend her colonial Empire, if need should arise...

The English replied with an embarrassed smile. The idea of appealing to German troops to defend the Empire shocked them as an impropriety. Moreover, the protective tone with which Ribbentrop had pronounced these last words had not escaped them. They made him understand in a polite but firm tone that each day's trouble was enough for that day, and that they did not intend to follow him onto that ground.

All the more so because the signature of the naval agreement had provoked very violent reactions in Paris. The French government did not hesitate to say that it considered the British decision "morally inadmissible and juridically untenable." Could Germany be blamed for repudiating the clauses of the Treaty, when England herself was helping her tear up the little that remained of it? They stopped just short of accusing her of having betrayed her Allies...

The English reply was not long in coming. It was given on June 22 by Lord Londonderry, in an address delivered in the House of Lords:

— We are a practical people, he declared, accustomed to taking realities into account. The question before us was not to give Germany the right to do something that she would not have been able to do without our permission. Quite the contrary. The object of our initiative was to circumscribe, by an agreement with Germany, the ultimate consequences of a unilateral decision she had already taken and to which she had already begun to give a beginning of execution...

"In other words," writes Espagnac du Ravay, "the British government appeared to consider it a postulate that the Reich's unilateral decisions were final, and that, being unable to do anything against them, it had to be content with limiting their effects."

[Retained footnotes]

2. "Bring me back the English alliance!" Hitler said to him just before his departure for London. (Lagebesprechungen, p. 614, note 2.)

3. The terms of this address echo the note addressed the same day by the British government to the French government.

4. It is known that this pseudonym hides the personality of Admiral Darlan.

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In Berlin, the unexpected success won by the German delegation was celebrated as a great victory. Hitler did not hide his joy when Ribbentrop telephoned him from London to announce the signature of the agreement.

— Bravo! he replied. You have done good work. This day is the most beautiful of my life!

For the first time, one of the signatories of the Treaty of Versailles had admitted the Reich's theses on rearmament. People hastened to conclude from this that, of all the European capitals, London was the most "understanding" and that German leaders would at all times find there the most favorable hearing.

In Paris, on the other hand, bitterness was at its height. Since England had allowed the German fleet to pass from 108,000 to 420,000 tons, ours would have to increase from 628,000 to 940,000 tons. Financially, however, France was incapable of making such an effort for several years. Parallel to the navy, the army had to undertake the construction of matériel too long deferred, and all our aviation had to be reconstituted...

“From then on, the political aspect of the problem took precedence over all the others,” writes Espagnac du Ravay with a note of melancholy. “Our security was going to depend closely on pacts and conventions of mutual assistance... Even more than in the past, our policy found itself linked to British policy, to the point of being more and more subordinated to it.”

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XIV

THE FRANCO-SOVIET PACT AND THE REMILITARIZATION OF THE LEFT BANK OF THE RHINE

In truth, France had not waited for the conclusion of the Anglo-German naval agreement to enter upon the path of treaties of mutual assistance. On April 20, 1934, that is to say three days after the rupture of the Geneva negotiations, M. Barthou went to Prague and Warsaw to invite the Czech and Polish governments to sign with France agreements founded on the principle of “collective security.”

Favorably received in Prague by President Masaryk, M. Barthou was received more coolly by Marshal Pilsudski. The latter made him understand that he was in no way hostile to assistance pacts, on condition that this assistance be truly effective. Now Poland was separated from France by the whole extent of the Reich, while Germany and the U.S.S.R. were her immediate neighbors. The president of the Polish Republic did not see how the French armies could come to his aid if his country found itself attacked by one of these Powers. That is why all his efforts were aimed at maintaining the balance between the two. With this purpose, he had signed with Berlin a pact of non-aggression that seemed to him the surest guarantee of his security. He did not intend to compromise the advantages he expected from it by concluding a bilateral agreement with France.

[Retained footnotes]

2. Hitler, for his part, showered Poland with attentions from 1934 onward: the Führer received Ambassador Lipski at length; on January 24, 1935, he drew Pilsudski's attention to the Russian danger; in January 1935, Göring proposed a military alliance to Warsaw.

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Not discouraged by the failure of his efforts, M. Barthou departed again, on June 20, 1934, for a second tour of Central Europe. Since Poland was reluctant to conclude a separate agreement with France, why not associate Germany and Russia with it? In this way one would construct a sort of “Eastern Locarno,” which would form a harmonious counterpart to the Rhineland Pact.

But the talks undertaken in this direction marked time and made little progress. On September 10, 1934, Germany made it known that she did not intend to sign any treaty that would oblige her to render assistance to the U.S.S.R. and to defend the Soviet regime if it found itself attacked. Three days later (September 13), the Quai d'Orsay received an equally negative reply from Poland, which declined the perilous honor of letting a foreign army cross its territory. She had not forgotten what price she had paid for her independence, and knew too well that once Germany, or Russia, were installed in her country, a new war would be needed to dislodge it. These two refusals gave the coup de grâce to M. Barthou's project. Before even being born, the Eastern Pact collapsed like a house of cards.

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But the U.S.S.R. had not watched Germany's rearmament without apprehension, for she knew that this rearmament threatened her first of all. She was not unaware that Germany's lines of expansion remained oriented toward the Baltic and the Black Sea, and that everything — her historical traditions as well as her material interests — pushed her in that direction.

The day the Wehrmacht set itself in motion, it would be to resume von der Goltz's march on Riga and Leningrad, and that of Marshal von Eichhorn on Kiev and Odessa. Thus she redoubled her efforts to increase her means of defense.

The Red Army, whose strength the experts estimated at 950,000 men on December 31, 1934, had been raised to 1,300,000 men. The military budget had passed from 6.5 billion rubles to 14.8 billion. As for the Ossoaviakhim, or Central Office of National Defense, it had given a considerable development to military preparation, to the chemical industry, and to aviation.

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But Stalin, who felt threatened in the west by the recovery of Germany and in the east by the rapid rise of Japan, was obliged to split his forces into two autonomous army groups, separated by ten thousand kilometers of Siberian steppes. What would he not give to avoid a war on two fronts! Thus he had only one idea: to fix the bulk of the German forces in the west and to divert in that direction the thunderbolt that threatened him.

To this end, the foreign policy of the U.S.S.R. was going to undergo, in a few months, a radical transformation. Until then, the Soviets had fought against the bourgeois regimes in the hope of disaggregating and destroying them one after another. Now Stalin was going to turn toward the capitalist democracies, in the hope of finding there allies against Germany. This turn in Soviet foreign policy would be achieved in several stages.

On June 9 — the first act of Russian penetration into the West — Czechoslovakia, through the voice of M. Benes, and Romania, through that of M. Titulescu, announced that they recognized the Republic of the Soviets de jure. Three weeks later (July 2), the Czechoslovak foreign minister delivered a great speech, in the course of which he declared:

“A regrouping of the European forces is being prepared. This new constellation, made visible in recent weeks in a sudden and unexpected fashion, seems destined to modify from top to bottom the nature of

international relations on the continent.”

Meanwhile, Russia had asked to be admitted to the League of Nations. A commission was constituted to examine this request. But the admission of the Soviets at Geneva would not take place without struggle, for opinions were divided on the advisability of this measure. The Great Powers were generally favorable to the entry of the U.S.S.R.; certain countries reserved their position; others finally, such as Portugal,

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the Netherlands, and Switzerland, were resolutely hostile to it. Finally the supporters of admission prevailed, by 38 votes to 3, with 7 abstentions.

The solemn reception of the U.S.S.R. was the great event of the Assembly of 1934. Yet it is enough to reread certain speeches delivered on that occasion to perceive the emotion aroused by the entry of the Soviets at Geneva.

“The Swiss government,” M. Motta began by declaring, “always animated by the liveliest friendship for the Russian people, has nevertheless never wished to recognize *de jure* its present regime. It is resolved to remain in its position of refusal and waiting. When in 1918 an attempted general strike almost plunged us into the horrors of civil war, a Soviet mission that we had tolerated in Bern had to be expelled *manu militari*, for it had been involved in that agitation.

“Does a regime whose doctrine is expansive and militant communism fulfill the necessary conditions to be admitted among us? I do not think so. For this communism is, in every domain — religious, moral, social, political, economic — the most radical negation of all the ideas that are our substance and by which we live...

“The League of Nations is today attempting a risky enterprise. It does not fear to marry water with fire. If Soviet Russia suddenly ceases to insult the League of Nations, whereas Lenin had defined it as an enterprise of brigandage, the explanation of its new attitude is written in the signs that streak the sky in the Far East. We have no confidence. We cannot cooperate in the act that will confer on Soviet Russia a prestige that it did not yet have...

“But the dice are cast. *Alea jacta est*. We prefer to play the role of the one who warns and puts on guard. We hope that the future will accuse us of exaggerated mistrust. We count on all the other States to help us prevent Geneva from being transformed into a center of dissolving propaganda. By voting against, it is enough for us, for the moment, to prevent Russia from having been able to enter the League of Nations unanimously, in forgetfulness of its past and with triumphant crowns.”

Then M. Barthou mounted the tribune in his turn to answer the president of the Swiss Confederation:

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“I heard a moment ago, with an emotion that penetrated us all, the speech of the honorable M. Motta. I

am grateful to him for having expressed his opinion with so much independence and moral authority, and for having made declarations that, even at the hour when I speak, dominate this great debate...

“But is that really the debate? Is the debate to oppose doctrines to one another? M. Motta has spoken of political conceptions. Others before him — the delegate of Portugal, the delegate of Belgium, the delegate of the Netherlands — have said that there was incompatibility between these doctrines and the goals that we pursue here, from the economic point of view, from the political point of view, from the social point of view, and from the religious point of view... We must rise above these considerations...

“Here is a country that is ready to enter the European community, that submits to the laws of the League of Nations, and you want to send it back embittered, mistrustful, hostile? Reject Russia — where? Over there, against Europe? I do not wish to say more... I consider that it is in the interest of the League of Nations, if it wishes to be universal, to welcome Russia’s offer. And then, there is peace.

“You want peace and you are going to isolate Russia, inflicting on her the worst insult that can be inflicted on a country?

“That, very soberly, is the declaration I wished to make in the name of the French Republic.”

The next day, September 18, it was finally M. Litvinov’s turn:

“I wish first of all,” he said, “to recall with gratitude the initiative that was taken by the French government, as well as the sincere efforts that were deployed by the French delegation and personally by its foreign minister, M. Barthou, as well as by the president of the Council of the League of Nations, M. Benes, to have the U.S.S.R. admitted to the League of Nations.

“The Soviet Union itself represents a League of Nations in the best sense of the term, since it groups more than two hundred different nationalities. I shall even have the boldness to say that never has one seen so many nations coexist so peacefully within the framework of a single State, enjoy such freedom for their development and their civilization, and enjoy the benefits of their national culture...

“The Soviet government has never refused to collaborate in the political domain

[Retained footnotes]

1. Speech delivered by M. Barthou, delegate of France, on September 17, 1934. (Extracts.)

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when one could hope that this collaboration would make it possible to lessen international conflicts or to increase the guarantees of security and the consolidation of peace.

“But this consolidation of peace must have, for the ear and for the intelligence, a meaning different from that of twelve or fifteen years ago. We must use more effective means. I do not consider that the moment has come to speak of them in a more precise fashion...

“The Soviet delegations, at all the conferences in which they have participated, have presented

proposals tending to reduce to the minimum the chaos that currently exists in economic relations between States. The Soviet government has never ceased working in this direction since it has existed. It has come here to join its efforts to those of the other States represented at the League of Nations, and I am convinced that in this common search, in this will for peace — peace for itself and peace for the other States — the Soviet Union, with its one hundred sixty million inhabitants, will make its pacifying action powerfully felt.”

Three weeks later (October 9, 1934), M. Barthou was assassinated by a Croatian terrorist, while going to welcome King Alexander of Yugoslavia at Marseille. But his work would survive him: the talks he had begun around the Eastern Pact would be continued by Pierre Laval, who succeeded him at the Quai d’Orsay.

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The next step of the U.S.S.R. consisted in tightening its links with France. By virtue of the provisions of the Geneva Pact, Russia had to bring assistance to any member of the League that was the victim of aggression. One could have stopped there. But neither the French government nor the Soviet government judged this guarantee sufficient. Thus, from the end of 1934, negotiations began to substitute for the Franco-Soviet non-aggression pact of November 29, 1932, a treaty of friendship and mutual assistance involving much more precise commitments.

[Retained footnotes]

2. This treaty had been signed for a period of two years by MM. Herriot and Dovgalevsky, ambassador of the Soviets in Paris. It therefore expired on September 29, 1934.

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After having passed through periods of ups and downs — for the Soviet negotiator, M. Potemkin, seems to have wished to bind France in a much more rigorous fashion than M. Laval desired — these negotiations resulted, on May 2, 1935, in the signature of a treaty whose principal articles stipulated:

Article One. — In the event that France or the U.S.S.R. should be the object of a threat or danger of aggression on the part of a European State, the U.S.S.R. and reciprocally France undertake to proceed mutually to an immediate consultation, with a view to the measures to be taken for the observation of the provisions of Article 10 of the Covenant of the League of Nations.

Art. II. — In the event that, under the conditions provided in Article 15, § 7 of the Covenant of the League of Nations, France or the U.S.S.R. should, despite the sincerely pacific intentions of these two countries, be the object of an unprovoked aggression on the part of a European State, the U.S.S.R. and reciprocally France shall immediately lend each other aid and assistance.

Art. V. — The present Treaty shall be ratified and the instruments of ratification shall be exchanged at Moscow. It shall be registered with the secretariat of the League of Nations. It shall take effect from the exchange of ratifications and shall remain in force for five years. If it is not denounced by one of the High Contracting Parties, with at least one year’s notice before the expiration of this period, it shall remain in force without limitation of duration, each of the High Contracting Parties then being able to

terminate it by a declaration to that effect, with one year's notice.

To the Treaty proper was annexed a Protocol, of which paragraphs 1 and 4 are particularly important:

§ 1: It is understood that each Contracting Party must immediately render assistance to the other by conforming immediately to the recommendations of the Council of the League of Nations, as soon as they have been enunciated by virtue of Article 16 of the Covenant.

[Retained footnotes]

1. It is known that a few days before the signature, the rumor ran that the negotiations had broken down: M. Potemkin, ambassador of the U.S.S.R. in Paris, had just departed precipitately for Moscow, taking with him a first text of the treaty that M. Laval had refused to sign. What did this first version contain? This is unknown. But it is not rash to suggest that the U.S.S.R. sought to impose on France commitments of such extent that M. Laval had refused to assume responsibility for them. "The Soviets want a treaty in order to make war; and I, it is in order to avoid it," he let slip before his intimates. (Cf. Alfred Mallet, *Pierre Laval*, I, p. 85.) As for Ambassador Potemkin, he writes: "Laval's diplomatic collaborators strove by every means to give the future pact a purely formal character." (*History of Diplomacy*, III, p. 350.)

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It is also understood that the two Contracting Parties shall act with all the rapidity required by the circumstances and that if, nevertheless, the Council, for any reason whatever, makes no recommendation or does not arrive at a unanimous vote, the obligation of assistance shall nonetheless apply.

§ 4: The two governments note that the negotiations that have just resulted in the signature of the present Treaty were originally begun with a view to completing a security agreement embracing the countries of northeastern Europe, namely the U.S.S.R., Germany, Czechoslovakia, Poland, and the Baltic States neighboring the U.S.S.R.; alongside this agreement there was to be concluded a treaty of assistance between the U.S.S.R., France, and Germany, each of these three States undertaking to lend assistance to whichever of them might be the object of aggression by one of these three States.

Although circumstances have not yet permitted the conclusion of these agreements, which the two Parties continue to consider desirable, it nevertheless remains that the commitments set out in the Franco-Soviet Treaty of assistance must be understood as to operate only within the limits envisaged in the tripartite agreement previously projected.

For the Pact to enter into force, it only remained to proceed to the exchange of ratifications: this took place in Moscow on May 14, 1935.

Two days later (May 16), a similar pact was concluded between the U.S.S.R. and Czechoslovakia.

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On learning of the signature of these two agreements, all Soviet circles manifested general satisfaction.

But not the Reich, for it did not view without apprehension “the Bolshevik octopus extending its tentacles toward Prague and Paris.” All the more so because the drafting of paragraph 4 of the Protocol left no room for doubt: since neither Lithuania nor Poland would attack the U.S.S.R., the Pact was manifestly directed against Germany. She could escape it only by adhering to it herself; but in that case she would have to contract obligations toward the Soviet State and lend assistance to communism if it found itself in danger.

[Retained footnotes]

1. This clause means that the Pact of assistance operates only for Europe. It does not apply in the case where the U.S.S.R. entered into conflict with an Asiatic power.

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Still more serious in the eyes of Berlin was the drafting of paragraph 1 of the appended Protocol, which the experts of the Wilhelmstrasse interpreted in the following manner:

1. By undertaking to intervene even if the Council of the League of Nations made no recommendation, or did not arrive at a unanimous vote, France had taken toward the Soviet Union commitments that went far beyond the obligations incumbent upon her by virtue of the Covenant of the League of Nations, for she reserved the right to determine on her own authority who was the aggressor.

2. By the Treaty of Locarno, France had undertaken not to launch military operations against Germany, except:

a) in case of legitimate defense;

b) in the case where Poland and Czechoslovakia found themselves attacked by the Reich.

Outside these two precise cases, France had renounced any recourse to arms with regard to Germany, in return for the Reich's similar promise and the creation of a demilitarized zone on the left bank of the Rhine.

Now, a case of war was provided for in which, outside the circumstances specified in the Treaty of Locarno, France would have not only the right but the duty to attack Germany: this was the case where Germany should find herself at grips with the U.S.S.R.

On May 21, 1935, Hitler delivered a speech before the Reichstag, in which he drew the attention of international opinion to the gravity of the Franco-Soviet Pact:

— Germany, he said, has accepted and guaranteed by a solemn declaration to France the frontiers as they exist since the Saar plebiscite. Without stopping at the past, Germany has concluded with Poland a treaty excluding any recourse to force, which constitutes another more than precious contribution to European peace, a treaty that we not only wish to respect scrupulously, but about which we have only one desire: that of seeing it prolonged and constantly renewed. We have done this although we thereby definitively renounce Alsace-Lorraine, a country for which we once fought two great wars.

We are convinced that we have thus rendered service not only to our people, but also to this frontier region. For our part, we wish to do everything that depends on us to arrive at a true peace and a real friendship with the French people...

“We are ready to increase, by a treaty of non-aggression and exclusion of force, the feeling of security in each of the neighboring States of Germany. But it is not possible for us to complete such treaties by commitments of assistance that are not bearable for us, both from the point of view of our conception of the world and from the political and objective point of view. National Socialism cannot call the German people to combat for the preservation of a system that, at least in our own country, revealed itself as our most bitter enemy. A commitment for peace, yes! As for assistance from the communists in case of war, we do not wish for it and would not — for our part — be in a position to grant it. If those who, in Western Europe, pass judgment on Bolshevism possessed the same practical experience as I, I believe that there too one would arrive at an entirely different conception of things.

“The military alliance treaty between France and Russia has, without any doubt, introduced an element of insecurity into the only truly clear and valuable treaty that exists in Europe, namely the Treaty of Locarno. The interpretations that have recently been made from various sides concerning the obligations resulting from this new alliance undoubtedly arise from analogous fears... The German government would be particularly grateful to receive an authentic interpretation of the repercussions and effects that the Franco-Russian military alliance has on the contractual commitments of the various signatories of the Treaty of Locarno. Moreover, it would not wish to allow the slightest doubt to arise as to its own opinion, namely that it considers these military alliances incompatible with the spirit and the letter of the Covenant of the League of Nations.”

Four days later (May 25), the Reich government addressed to the French government a memorandum summarizing the German thesis and specifying that “any intervention by France, carried out by virtue of the Franco-Soviet Pact,

[Retained footnotes]

1. Hitler alludes in this sentence to certain questions asked in the House of Commons, which betrayed the uneasiness of part of English opinion.

would be contrary to Article 16 of the Covenant of the League of Nations and would signify a violation of the Treaty of Locarno.”

On June 25, France answered this memorandum by refuting point by point the German argumentation. The Franco-Soviet Pact was not a military alliance. It had been drafted so as to fit with the Treaty of Locarno and the Covenant of the League of Nations. The Reich's thesis was therefore inadmissible. If Germany infringed the commitments she had contracted by virtue of the Rhineland Pact — a Pact that she had freely signed and of which she herself had initiated the negotiations — then it was she, and not

France, who would violate her word, and the Western Powers would have to draw the conclusions that imposed themselves.

For greater certainty, France consulted the guarantors of the Treaty of Locarno, that is England, Italy, and Belgium, on the validity of this point of view. On July 5, after some hesitation, the English government replied “that the signature of the Franco-Soviet Pact changes nothing in the obligations contracted by Great Britain.” On July 15 and 19, Italy and Belgium replied in the same sense.

But Germany was not content with these explanations. For her, the Franco-Soviet treaty created, by its mere existence, an entirely new situation. It posed a political problem that had to be appreciated in all its breadth and that exceeded, by its gravity, simple questions of form. As a consequence of its conclusion — and of the Russo-Czech treaty that completed it — “an Asiatic empire of one hundred sixty million inhabitants finds itself introduced into the heart of European affairs.”

At the end of July, the Reich instructed its ambassadors in London, Paris, Rome, and Brussels to inform the different governments that, despite the notes received, Germany maintained its point of view and did not consider the question settled.

At the beginning of 1936, the Reich made a new diplomatic step. It informed France, through its chargé d'affaires in Paris,

[Retained footnotes]

1. See vol. II, p. 326.

2. In April, Sir John Simon, British foreign secretary, had telegraphed Clark, his ambassador in Paris: “Make Laval know without ambiguity that England is concerned to see France conclude a treaty that could eventually bring her to participate in a war against Germany under conditions incompatible with paragraph 2 of the Pact of Locarno.”

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that it was still ready to sign a pact of non-aggression with her, but that it would consider the ratification of the Soviet Pact by the French Parliament “as an unfriendly act toward Germany, and incompatible with the obligations of the Treaty of Locarno.” M. Flandin replied that the question had already been settled by the governments concerned and that there was no longer any occasion to return to it; that, moreover, France considered herself already committed toward the U.S.S.R. by the signature placed at the bottom of the Pact on May 2, 1935.

From then on events rolled down a dangerous slope.

On February 12, discussion of the Soviet Pact opened in the Chamber of Deputies. On the 13th and the following days, speakers succeeded one another at the tribune. At the same moment, General Tukhachevsky was in Paris, where he had a long interview with General Gamelin.

However, the signature of the Pact encountered, within Parliament, a fairly lively opposition. On the 14th, M. Montigny expressed concern “over what the freedom of judgment of France would be, once

the Pact and the Protocol were completed by military agreements, which would not be submitted to ratification by Parliament.”

On the 19th, M. Taittinger warned opinion against the consequences of this agreement. He predicted that its ratification would be considered a threat by the Reich, and that it would furnish it the occasion to remilitarize the left bank of the Rhine. His speech was chopped up by noisy interruptions from the extreme left. MM. Philippe Henriot, Marcel Héraud, and Jacques Doriot in turn testified to their apprehension. The debates continued in an oppressed atmosphere.

On February 21, Hitler attempted a final effort to dissuade France from ratifying the Pact. He addressed French opinion directly in an interview granted to M. Bertrand de Jouvenel:

— I know what you think, he said to his French interlocutor. You say to yourselves: “Hitler makes us pacific declarations, but is he in good faith? Is he sincere?”

“Is yours not a childish point of view? Instead of giving yourselves up to psychological guessing games, would you not do better to reason by using that famous logic to

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which the French declare themselves so attached? Is it not obviously to the advantage of our two countries to maintain good relations? Would it not be ruinous for them to collide on new battlefields? Is it not logical that I should want what is most advantageous to my country, and is not what is most advantageous obviously peace?

“In your country, people imagine me quite other than I am because they see clearly that I started from nothing to become the master of Germany, and that this is an astonishing destiny, and they believe they find extraordinary causes in it. Some say that it is by violence that I became the head of the German nation; but, you know, the few comrades we were at the beginning would have had a hard time seizing by violence a nation of sixty-five million inhabitants!

“People also say that I owed my success to having created a mystique... or else simply that I was served by chance. Well, I am going to tell you what carried me to where I am!

“Political problems appeared complicated. The German people understood nothing of them... I decomplicated the problems. I reduced them to simple terms. The great masses understood. And they followed me!... Today I want to demonstrate to my people that the notion of eternal enmity between France and Germany is absurd, that we are in no way hereditary enemies. The German people understand it. They followed me in an infinitely more difficult reconciliation, the reconciliation of Germany with Poland.

“In your country, the agreement between Germany and Poland has been interpreted as an act of diplomatic virtuosity on my part. It is a compliment, but one that does not please me and is not deserved. Simply, the tension between Germany and Poland could not last. It was unhealthy, enervating. It was logical that I should seek to put an end to it. I succeeded. And the whole German people felt relieved by it. And now, I want to succeed in the same détente with France. It is not good that peoples wear out their psychological forces in barren hatreds...”

At this moment, Bertrand de Jouvenel interrupted him to say:

— We French, if we read your pacific declarations with satisfaction, nevertheless remain uneasy before other less encouraging indications. Thus, in *Mein Kampf*, you said the worst things about France. Now, this book is regarded throughout all Germany as

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a sort of political Bible. And it circulates without your having made the slightest author's correction, in the successive editions, to what you said of France...

Hitler made a grimace, placed his hand on his interlocutor's arm, and replied:

— I was in prison when I wrote that book. French troops were occupying the Ruhr. It was the moment of the greatest tension between our two countries. Yes, we were enemies! And I was with my country, as is proper, against yours. As I was with my country against yours for four and a half years in the trenches! I would despise myself if I were not above all German when conflict comes... But today there is no longer any reason for conflict. You want me to make corrections in my book, like a writer preparing a new edition of his works? But I am not a writer; I am a politician. My correction? I bring it every day in my foreign policy, entirely directed toward friendship with France!

"If I succeed in the Franco-German rapprochement as I wish, that will be a correction worthy of me! My correction, I shall write it in the great book of History!"

Bertrand de Jouvenel then asked him this question:

— You desire Franco-German rapprochement. Is the Franco-Soviet Pact not going to compromise it?

Hitler's face became grave. The two interlocutors had arrived at the heart of the matter.

— My personal efforts toward such a rapprochement will always endure. However, in the domain of facts, this more than deplorable Pact would naturally create a new situation...

A moment of silence. Then he continued in a stronger voice:

[Retained footnotes]

1. In certain passages of *Mein Kampf*, one reads in effect that France is and will always remain Germany's enemy no. 1, and that every German nationalist must strive to overthrow her. Later, Hitler would declare to Ribbentrop that "the greatest mistake he had committed was to publish the chapters of *Mein Kampf* relating to questions of foreign policy." (Ribbentrop, *Memoirs*, p. 37.)

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— Do you realize what you are doing? You are allowing yourselves to be drawn into the diplomatic game of a Power that desires only to put into the great European nations a disorder from which it will be the beneficiary. One must not lose sight of the fact that Soviet Russia is a political element having at its disposal an explosive revolutionary idea and gigantic armaments. As a German, I have the duty to take such a situation into account. Bolshevism has no chance of succeeding among us. But there are other great nations that are less protected than we are against the Bolshevist virus...

“You would do well to reflect seriously on my offers of understanding. Never has a German leader made such overtures to you, nor such repeated ones. And from whom do these offers emanate? From a pacifist charlatan who has made a specialty of international relations? No, but from the greatest nationalist Germany has ever had at her head! I bring you what no one else could ever have brought you: an understanding that will be approved by 90% of the German nation, the 90% who follow me. I beg you to take care over this:

“There are, in the life of peoples, decisive occasions. Today France can, if she wishes, put an end forever to this ‘German peril’ that your children, from generation to generation, learn to dread. You can lift the fearful mortgage that weighs on the history of France. This chance is given to you. If you do not seize it, think of your responsibility toward your children. You have before you a Germany nine-tenths of which has full confidence in its leader, and this leader says to you: ‘Let us be friends!’”

In formulating these proposals, was Hitler sincere? There is no serious reason to doubt it. Did he feel friendship for France? This question, on the other hand, is devoid of meaning. Hitler loved only Germany, or more exactly the conception he had of it. As for France, he considered it a versatile and corrupt country, whose leaders had only one idea: to keep his country on the ground by binding it in the bonds of an iniquitous treaty. Its grandeur and its culture remained alien to him. Despite his dizzying ascent, the son of the customs official of Braunau had remained, in some respects, a petty provincial. Hence his psychological errors and his angry surprise before certain foreign reactions that he had not foreseen...

[Retained footnotes]

1. Chancellor Hitler tells us..., Paris-Midi, issue of February 28, 1936.

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But then, how reconcile these antinomic tendencies? It is very simple. To crush communism was one of the fundamental axioms of his political credo. Hitler therefore sensed that sooner or later he would have trouble with Russia. Moreover, he was irresistibly attracted by the immense spaces of eastern Europe. There lay the future of the Germanic nation. Now, he did not want at any price that, by signing a pact with Russia, France should forbid him access to it by obliging him to fight on two fronts at once on the day when he wished to attain his essential objectives. Thus he was ready to make every possible commitment in the west, but on one formal condition: that his hands be left free in the east.

Finally, he considered that his proposals were of a nature to strike the minds of the French, and above all to make the members of Parliament reflect, already very divided on the Soviet question. He thought that his interview, coming at this precise moment, could tip the balance in favor of non-ratification of the Pact. But the deputies would not learn of it at the proper time, for publication of the interview

would be delayed by seven days — and the public would be informed of it only when it was too late. Because of this, the proposals formulated by Hitler to clarify the situation would be the point of departure for an awful misunderstanding...

On the very day when Hitler made these remarks to Bertrand de Jouvenel, M. Herriot delivered a great speech in which he enumerated all the reasons arguing in favor of ratification of the Pact. On the 25th, M. Flandin, speaking in the name of the government, expressed himself in the same sense. Finally, the vote took place during the day of the 27th. The Franco-Soviet Pact was approved by 353 votes to 164.

Hitler's proposals were brought to the knowledge of the French public only the day after ratification.

When readers read the Chancellor's interview in the February 28 issue of Paris-Midi, they could not repress a movement of surprise.

[Retained footnotes]

1. The text was "held for examination" for a week by the press services of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. After which, to weaken its effect, it was given to a noon paper, with a circulation appreciably lower than those of the morning papers.

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Coming after the ratification of the Pact, Hitler's proposals took on quite another resonance. People came to wonder whether it was not the signature of the Pact that had brought Hitler to composition and had led him to formulate such friendly offers. But then, how right they had been to ratify the Treaty, since it brought France, at one and the same time, the guarantee of Moscow and overtures from Berlin! There was no doubt that the Chancellor, resigning himself to the inevitable, had found it wiser to move closer to France...

French governmental circles seemed to rally to this point of view, since, from the very next day, M. Flandin instructed the French ambassador in Berlin to request an audience with the Chancellor "to examine with him his offers of peace, which greatly interest the French government, and to obtain from him additional clarifications."

M. François-Poncet therefore went to the Chancellery. But the interview took place in an atmosphere quite other than friendly.

— I shall indeed give you additional clarifications, Hitler roared at the height of rage. I shall answer as one answers a moral swindle. For I have been betrayed, mocked! My interview with M. de Jouvenel was in no way an approval of your Pact, but a last warning against its ratification. I received Jouvenel more than eight days ago. He understood perfectly what it was about. But in Paris, and no doubt also in your embassy, publication of the article was delayed in order to deceive the French about my true intentions!

François-Poncet might protest that in France the press is free, that the government cannot permit itself such a maneuver, and that he himself had learned of the text of the interview only by reading the newspapers; the Führer believed none of it and refused to be moved from his position.

— But read at last what I said! he cried. Then you will see clearly that my remarks were in no way an approval of the Franco-Soviet Pact! A France that has become the ally of the Kremlin is no longer the France to which I addressed myself a week ago. You will receive my answer before long!

In using this language, did Hitler believe he was intimidating the French government? In that case, he was mistaken, for the policy of alliances pursued by France had just been considerably reinforced by the conclusion of the Soviet Pact.

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The network of treaties that bound her to Belgium, Italy, Czechoslovakia, Poland, and finally to the U.S.S.R. formed an impressive edifice. Would one object that it was seriously handicapped by the purely defensive character of French military conceptions, founded on the invulnerability of the Maginot Line? This argument does not withstand examination. For France held a major trump: the demilitarization of the left bank of the Rhine. It was one of the last obligations imposed on Germany by the Treaty of Versailles, which Briand and Stresemann had incorporated into the Pact of Locarno.

The strength of France therefore rested essentially on Germany's weakness in a region that was for her of primordial strategic and economic importance. In case of conflict, France could reoccupy the Rhineland before even the first elements of the German army had crossed the bridges of the Rhine. "The demilitarized Rhineland," writes Peter Kleist, "is a pledge that France can seize at any moment, an open flank where with one stroke she can cut the economic and strategic arteries of German resistance. It is the spearhead of her foreign policy, as the Maginot Line is the pillar of her internal security."

Only, this pledge she could seize only on condition of being assured of the support of her allies. Was their assistance guaranteed to her? That was the whole question...

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For two days and two nights Hitler shut himself in his office and worked without respite. Then, after having weighed at length the pros and cons, he decided to stake everything.

On March 6, he assembled his closest collaborators and informed them of his decision: to answer the ratification of the Franco-Soviet Pact by the remilitarization of the Rhineland.

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— It is now or never that we must act, he affirmed in a peremptory tone.

A deathly silence followed his words. Those present were appalled. Did Hitler realize the risks to which he was exposing himself? How could he believe that France would let its last trump be snatched from it without reacting? How could he accept, after the series of successes he had won, putting everything at stake again on a mere throw of the dice? In their eyes, the remilitarization of the Rhineland was an act

of madness.

After a long moment, General von Blomberg decided to express his apprehensions. With the help of precise figures, he demonstrated to the Führer that Germany's military inferiority, both from the point of view of effectives and of armaments, made it impossible for her to answer a French riposte. The new Wehrmacht was weaker than it had been two years before because it was in full reorganization. The recruits of the class of 1914, incorporated in November 1935, had received only six months' instruction. The cadres were insufficient. As for matériel — especially with regard to aircraft and tanks — it was still far from ready. The Wehrmacht still needed two years before it could undergo the test of fire. As it was at that moment, it would be crushed. MM. von Neurath and Schacht intervened in the debate. They made the most explicit reservations about the success of the undertaking, placing themselves from the diplomatic and financial point of view.

But Hitler refused to let himself be influenced by the advice of his experts.

— All the dangers you depict to me might perhaps be true in the event of a French reaction, he answered them. In reality, they are illusory, for France will not move.

— Are you certain? Neurath insisted.

— I repeat to you that France will not move. Carry out my orders, and trust me for the rest!

The next morning, March 7, Hitler mounted the tribune.

[Retained footnotes]

1. "If France cares at all about her security, she must act at any price; such was the reasoning that we all made at the Wilhelmstrasse." (Paul Schmidt, *Statist auf Diplomatischer Bühne*, p. 93.)

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of the Reichstag and declared to the deputies, whom he had summoned urgently:

"To the friendly offers and the peaceful assurances that Germany has never ceased to repeat to her, France has answered by a military alliance with the Soviet Union, which is directed exclusively against Germany and which constitutes a violation of the Rhineland Pact. From that moment the Treaty of Locarno has lost all meaning and has practically ceased to exist. The German Government no longer considers itself bound by this obsolete pact. It now finds itself compelled to face the new situation created by this alliance, a situation that is further aggravated by the fact that the Franco-Soviet treaty is accompanied by a parallel treaty of alliance between Czechoslovakia and the U.S.S.R. By virtue of the inalienable right possessed by every people to guarantee its frontiers and safeguard its means of defense, the German Government has restored, as of today, the full and complete sovereignty of the Reich over the demilitarized Rhineland zone.

"At the historic hour at which I speak to you, German troops have just entered the western provinces of the Reich, to occupy there their peacetime garrisons..."

And this was exact. At the very moment when Hitler mounted the tribune, the regiments of the Wehrmacht had begun to march toward the Rhineland. It was Colonel Gallenkamp, former deputy of Colonel von Blomberg at the Truppenamt, who had drawn up the plans of the operation.

Around noon, a battalion of the 39th Infantry Regiment detrained at Cologne-Kalk. At the same instant, the first military aircraft appeared in the sky. Flying at low altitude, in a deafening thunder, a fighter squadron described a circle above the spires of the cathedral and disappeared to the west, soon followed by a second, then by a third squadron.

A compact crowd lined the streets that descended toward the Rhine. In a few minutes, the banks of the river and the center of the city had filled with people.

At 12:50, the first officer of the new German army crossed the Hohenzollern Bridge. The burgomaster of Cologne, M. Riesen, advanced toward him to welcome him.

— We are proud and moved, answered the commander

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of the detachment, to be the soldiers for whom the Führer has opened the roads of the Rhineland.

At 1 p.m. the first gun appeared. Then several batteries of heavy artillery, tank sections, and motorized troops from Langenberg followed one another.

New squadrons furrowed the sky. The great bell of the cathedral began to swing, mingling the clamor of bronze with the roar of the engines. In less than an hour, the whole city of Cologne had been transformed into a sea of flags. The crowd frantically acclaimed the troops that marched past on the Post Office Square. Young girls threw flowers to the officers and soldiers. The anguished tension of the first minutes now gave way to delirious enthusiasm.

At the same instant, identical scenes were unfolding throughout the Rhineland. At Cologne, at Coblenz, at Mainz, at Mannheim, the bridges resounded beneath the soldiers' measured step.

Eighteen years earlier, in the misty half-light of November, these same bridges had vibrated beneath the gloomy step of the armies of the west, returning from the front, defeated and exhausted. Painfully, though in good order, the men advanced, dressed in patched tunics, their eyes filled with tragic despair, carrying their useless rifles and supporting their comrades whose feet were bloodied.

Now the movement was taking place in the opposite direction, under the radiant brightness of a spring day. The soldiers marching past were the young recruits of the class of 1914. They were dressed in new uniforms and equipment, and in their eyes shone an ardent resolution. At a distance of eighteen years, these two symmetrical scenes seemed to open and close a period of German history.

Throughout the afternoon, 19 battalions and 13 batteries, accompanied by their supply services, engineer sections, and auxiliary detachments, in all about 30,000 men, traversed the roads of the Rhineland and the Palatinate, marching in the direction of the French frontier. At 6 p.m., they installed themselves in their new garrisons. These were still only symbolic detachments, that is to say reduced-

strength units, operating

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The remilitarization of the left bank of the Rhine
(March 7, 1936).

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separately and lacking a unified command. But on the following day and the days after that, the arrival of reinforcements continued. Forty-eight hours later, the left bank of the Rhine was occupied.

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On learning that the sentries of the Wehrmacht were once again mounting guard on the Rhine and that Strasbourg was at the mercy of German guns, the world held its breath. What would Europe do? Above all, what would France do, seeing one of the cornerstones of her foreign policy disappear in this way? Would she answer Hitler's gesture with force?

Certainly, it would have been easy for her to crush the small symbolic detachments that had crossed the Rhine. The German generals knew this, and that is why they had difficulty mastering their anxiety. As for Hitler himself, he would later acknowledge "that he lived through those days under the weight of an anguish he hoped never to experience again, even in ten years." For him, as for all Germany, the question was the same: what would Paris do?

On the banks of the Seine, emotion was at its height. A few moments before Hitler delivered his speech, M. von Neurath had handed M. François-Poncet a memorandum in which the Reich proposed to France the conclusion of a non-aggression pact for a duration of twenty-five years. As soon as he had this text in his possession, M. Albert Sarraut convened a Cabinet council. It was a Saturday, and several ministers were absent. Sarraut wanted to act quickly, as quickly as Hitler. But England, Belgium, and Italy were the guarantors of Locarno. Before doing anything, he had to consult them. He therefore sent his ministers home, to give himself time to confer with his allies.

It was only the next morning, March 8, that the Council of Ministers was able to meet, in full, under the presidency of M. Lebrun. M. Flandin, Minister of Foreign Affairs, began by taking stock of the situation:

[Retained footnotes]

1. Paul Schmidt writes that Hitler once declared in his presence that the twenty-four hours following the entry of German troops into the Rhineland had been among the most tense of his life. "If the French had entered Germany, as I believed possible during those twenty-four hours," he assured him, "I would have been obliged to withdraw, to my great shame." (Op. cit., p. 93.)

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— The Rhineland is occupied, he declared. Although it is only by symbolic detachments, the fact is no less patent. The Pact of Locarno is torn up. In exchange, Hitler proposes to us a non-aggression pact for a duration of twenty-five years. He also offers to establish, on both sides of the Franco-German frontier, a demilitarized zone whose depth the French Government itself will determine.

— To enter into these views would be to bow before the coup de force, objected Sarraut. There can be no question of negotiating under threat...

By unanimous opinion, the German proposals were considered inadmissible.

— I have made contact with London, M. Flandin continued. We have agreed to convene immediately in Paris a conference of the Powers signatory to the Treaty of Locarno.

— That is good, but it is not sufficient! exclaimed M. Paul-Boncour. Every hour that passes strengthens the German position. Our answer must be lightning-fast and immediate...

— Are we going to answer blow for blow? asked M. Georges Mandel, Minister of Posts, Telegraphs and Telephones and of Alsace-Lorraine, or are we going to bog ourselves down in legal quibbles?

The Council of Ministers consequently proclaimed “that the German provocation is an act of hostility, which demands a military riposte on the part of the signatories of the Treaty of Locarno.” An appeal to that effect would be addressed to them during the day. To give greater weight to its request, the French Government ordered:

1. That the Maginot Line be occupied by its wartime effectives;
2. That the North African divisions be brought up from the South to concentrate them along the German frontier;
3. That all leaves be suppressed for the troops stationed in the departments of the north and east;

[Retained footnotes]

1. This depth could not be very great, since the Maginot Line bordered the Franco-German frontier. To accept a demilitarized zone of several kilometers would involve the dismantling of our fortified system. Hitler was not unaware of this.

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4. That a state of alert be proclaimed over the whole territory.

At 2 p.m., M. Sarraut delivered a speech on the radio:

“Germany,” he declared, “has just reoccupied the left bank of the Rhine. She resolved upon this gesture

only because she knows France to be divided... But France has always known how to unite before external peril. I declare it solemnly: never will France negotiate with Germany so long as Strasbourg is within range of German guns!"

Sarraut had spoken from his apartment on the Avenue Victor-Hugo. But his day was far from over. In the course of the afternoon, he received the ministers of the three armed services: General Maurin, Minister of War; M. François Piétri, Minister of the Navy; M. Marcel Déat, Minister of Air, in the presence of General Gamelin, Chief of the General Staff.

— Well, where are we? he asked them briskly. What measures can we take to answer the German provocation? What is the situation of our army, and what time does it need to enter into action?

The answer he received had the effect of an icy shower. Yes, the frontier units were in a state of alert. Yes, the Maginot Line was occupied. Behind it, the North African divisions were coming up from the South. But there our possibilities stopped.

— To carry ourselves forward from the Maginot Line would not be in conformity with the interests of the country, General Gamelin affirmed.

— Could we not at least reoccupy the Saar, by sending a few light units there? Sarraut insisted.

— Unless we supported them with several normal divisions, that would be very risky, answered Gamelin.

— Who prevents us from doing so?

— To have the necessary effectives available, it is not enough to recall the men on leave. It would be necessary to decree general mobilization...

The general was moved. He spoke in a low voice, but his diagnosis was formal. It was impossible to go further. France was the prisoner of her fortifications, like Sleeping Beauty in her enchanted palace.

Has Germany won? Not yet. She has obtained only a respite. Her situation remains precarious. France has

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proceeded to the beginning of mobilization. She has alerted her allies. She has received promises of military support from Poland and from the members of the Little Entente. Now each of those countries possessed an army stronger than the Wehrmacht of 1936. Because of this, a mechanism had been set in motion that could very well end in a general war. Everything now depended on the attitude of England. Flandin had not contented himself with bringing before the League of Nations a complaint against Germany's unilateral action: he had telephoned London to ask the British Government to proceed, on land, at sea, and in the air, with a mobilization parallel to that of France.

But England did not at any price wish to engage in that path. She did not intend to call into question the naval agreement she had concluded with Germany less than nine months earlier. Moreover, the signing

of the Franco-Soviet Pact had not been viewed very favorably on the banks of the Thames. Voices had been raised to denounce its dangers. Lord Astor had warned the British Government that this agreement might very well be the starting point of a Communist revolution in Europe. Lord Lothian considered that it would be better to dissuade France from pursuing her adventurous policy rather than encourage her in it. In short, English opinion was in no way ready to face a war to prevent Germany from reoccupying the left bank of the Rhine.

In the evening, the representatives of the Powers signatory to the Treaty of Locarno arrived in Paris to confer with M. Flandin. M. Anthony Eden and Lord Halifax represented England; M. van Zeeland, Belgium; and M. Cerutti, Italy. M. Flandin began by setting out the French point of view:

— We are sufficiently armed, by ourselves alone, to oblige the German army to evacuate the territory it has occupied in violation of the treaties, he declared in a strong voice. This violation is flagrant. France's right to act is incontestable. To respect the desire of Great Britain, France has seized the League of Nations, so that the Council may establish the breach in the shortest possible time. But at the same time, France has taken and is going to take military measures preparatory to the intervention she

[Retained footnotes]

1. Czechoslovakia, Romania, and Yugoslavia.

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considers indispensable. She does not propose to act only to ensure her own security, but to guarantee for the future the territorial clauses of the Treaty of Versailles and also to be in a position to honor the obligations she has contracted, within the framework of the Pact of the League of Nations, toward Austria, Poland, and Czechoslovakia...

This language was precisely what England did not wish to hear. Thus M. Eden answered "that he had received a mission from the British Government to press the French Government not to undertake anything with regard to Germany that might create a danger of war."

Lord Halifax then took the floor in turn to affirm that the dispute created by the reoccupation of the Rhineland must be settled by negotiation and that His Majesty's Government was ready to assume the role of mediator.

— Moreover, he continued, Chancellor Hitler has presented a set of proposals of which at least some deserve to be retained. Finally, no decision can be taken before the meeting of the Council of the League of Nations, whose intervention is considered indispensable by both the British Parliament and British opinion.

M. van Zeeland, the Belgian delegate, declared that he entirely shared the British point of view. M. Cerutti scarcely spoke, but the little he said was enough to make it understood that Italy too was hostile to any intervention. M. Flandin strove in vain to make them change their minds. "The whole world, and particularly the small nations, have their eyes fixed today on England," he cried, turning toward the British delegates. "If England acts, she can take the lead of Europe..., it is her last chance. If she does not now impose a halt on Germany, then everything is lost..." But his efforts were vain. His

interlocutors opposed him with a polite but formal refusal.

On March 12, he had an interview with Neville Chamberlain. The Chancellor of the Exchequer, who would soon become Prime Minister, frankly explained to him why the British ministers were showing themselves so reticent. “English opinion would not support them if they embarked on the path of sanctions, whatever their nature.”

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What could the French Minister of Foreign Affairs hope for under these conditions? To go it alone, as Churchill wished? In words, that was easy. But in fact? Flandin was not unaware of the reluctance of the French High Command and knew that General Gamelin had set out for President Sarraut the difficulties that military action would encounter. Nothing remained for him but to await the meeting of the Council of the League of Nations, which had been convened in London for March 14.

The day after the Paris Conference, Eden asked the German Government “to preserve a symbolic character for its reoccupation and not to proceed to the erection of fortifications.”

Hitler took it haughtily:

— What charming neighbors, he said to Neurath, who claim to forbid me to bolt my door!

He gave his Minister of Foreign Affairs the order to reject any discussion tending to limit German sovereignty in the Rhineland. At most, he consented not to increase the strength of his troops during the negotiations and not to bring them closer to the French and Belgian frontiers.

— He is definitely mad! von Neurath said to himself. With his excessive pretensions, he is going to make everything collapse...

On March 14, the Council of the League of Nations met in London, at St. James’s Palace, where the Treaty of Locarno had been ratified in 1925. The Australian delegate, M. Bruce, presided over the session. M. Flandin spoke first to demonstrate that Germany had violated Article 43 of the Treaty of Versailles and to ask the Council to pronounce its condemnation. He also suggested that the question be submitted to the International Court at The Hague, so that it might say whether the Franco-Soviet Pact was or was not in contradiction with the Treaty of Locarno.

The juridical discussion continued for several days, but it was on March 18 that M. Eden pronounced the decisive words:

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1. “If the French Government of the time had been equal to its task,” he would later write, “it would have decreed general mobilization immediately and would thereby have obliged all the others to follow it... After all, it was a matter for France of being or not being. Any French Government worthy of the name would have taken this initiative on its own, leaving the rest to the obligations of the treaties.” If one understands the situation correctly, everyone wanted his neighbor to commit himself first.

— It is evident, he declared, that the entry of German troops into the Rhineland is equivalent to a violation of the Treaty of Versailles. However, this action does not represent a threat to peace and does not require the direct riposte provided in certain cases by the Treaty of Locarno. No doubt the reoccupation of the Rhineland compromises the power of France; but it in no way compromises her security.

As for Italy, no enthusiastic support could be expected from it, for the League of Nations had not ceased to condemn it since the beginning of the Abyssinian campaign. This is what its delegate, M. Grandi, made understood without ambiguity.

— Italy is at once the guarantor of Locarno and the object of sanctions. That is a situation whose contradiction leaps to the eyes. Can one, without ambiguity, assume the role of judge when one is oneself in the posture of the accused?

On March 19, M. von Ribbentrop appeared before the Council. It was not a diplomatic conference: it was a veritable tribunal. M. Litvinov sat there as Soviet delegate to the League of Nations. His satisfaction was expressed by a broad smile, which he tried to conceal behind an unfolded newspaper — an issue of *The Times* in the reading of which he would pretend to immerse himself throughout the exposition of the German delegate. The extraordinary ambassador of the Führer knew that he had to deal with an areopagus that would allow itself to be influenced by none of his arguments. Thus, renouncing any juridical analysis, he approached the problem from its political angle:

“Chancellor Hitler,” he declared, “has formulated a whole series of proposals in favor of peace. No account has been taken of them.

“He proposed general disarmament: it was rejected.

“He proposed armament parity, based on armies of 200,000 men: it was rejected.

“He proposed raising that figure to 300,000 men: it was rejected.

“He proposed an air pact: it was rejected.

“In his speech of May 21, 1935, he proposed a set of measures intended to ensure peace in Europe: nothing was retained from it, except the provisions relating to disarmament at sea, which served as the basis for the Anglo-German Naval Agreement.

“The Reich Chancellor has constantly repeated his offers of peace and — permit me to say it here — he himself and

all Germany hoped that the Franco-Soviet Pact would not be ratified.

“When, overriding his offers and his warnings, the French Parliament ratified this Pact, the Reich Chancellor, conscious of his heavy responsibilities toward the German people, drew from it the only conclusion that imposed itself. He restored German sovereignty over the whole territory of the Reich.

“In acting thus, the German Government based itself on the following facts:

“1. As a result of the unilateral action of France, the spirit and the letter of the Pact of Locarno have been so radically falsified that the Pact itself has lost its validity.

“2. As a result of the new military alliance concluded between France and the U.S.S.R., Germany was compelled to have recourse without delay to the elementary right that every nation has to ensure the security of its own territory.

“That is why the Reich Government categorically rejects, as devoid of all foundation, the accusation of having unilaterally violated the Treaty of Locarno. It is materially impossible to violate an agreement that the actions of the other signatory have already rendered obsolete.”

After this exposition, Ribbentrop returned to Hitler’s peace proposals:

“The content and scope of the German proposals need no commentary. They are so broad and so complete that any statesman animated by a sincere love for Europe can only wish for their rapid implementation.

“May the Council, overcoming its present sentiments, become conscious of their historical significance and recognize that it holds in its hands the instruments thanks to which it is possible to drive back the specter of war and lead an anxious Europe onto the path of peace.”

This intervention was skillful, for it tended to efface the past by making promises of the future glitter before the eyes. But in the corridors of the Conference, the majority of the delegates had agreed to confine themselves to “taking note” of Ribbentrop’s declarations. These would not be submitted to discussion and no answer would be made to them. As soon as

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1. “The Soviet delegate Litvinov prepared to answer me,” Ribbentrop writes. “At that moment Eden, who had made efforts from the beginning to thaw the atmosphere, approached him and spoke to him. He obtained that, instead of refuting my arguments, the Russian representative again entrenched himself behind his newspaper.” (Memoirs, p. 69.)

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the representative of the Reich had ceased speaking, M. Bruce adjourned the session.

When the members of the Council met again after the noon suspension, no debate took place. The delegates contented themselves with declaring “that Article 43 of the Treaty of Versailles has been violated by Germany.”

For the Reich, this was a finding of guilt. But a purely platonic finding, for Hitler was not summoned to withdraw his troops. There was no question of military intervention, nor of reprisals, nor of sanctions of any kind. On the contrary. Germany had expected a condemnation: it obtained a favorable judgment.

The French delegation was not, moreover, at the end of its astonishments. "In taking this decision," M. Bruce declared before closing the session, "the Council has not yet completed its mission. It now falls to the Powers most directly interested to meet in order to find a constructive solution. The declarations of France and Belgium have been marked by a moderation that has earned them the consideration of all. For his part, Chancellor Hitler has renewed his will to cooperate: it was confirmed to us this very morning by his personal representative. I am convinced, under these conditions, that a solution will be found."

The members of the Council listened to M. Bruce in silence. Then they separated without adding a word.

Had this final declaration, whose unexpected terms were a direct invitation to resume negotiations, been prepared behind the scenes by the Australian delegate and the British Cabinet? One would be tempted to believe it. For the very next day, Eden made contact with Ribbentrop, as if nothing had happened, "to examine to what extent it would be possible to reconcile what remained of the Treaty of Locarno with the new peace plan proposed by the Führer." Only one concession would be made to France: to make the pill less bitter for her, the British Government consented to a closer collaboration being established between the French and British General Staffs. As Ribbentrop was worried about this, his interlocutors made him understand that the Franco-British military conversations would be a mere formality...

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The incredible had happened: Hitler had won. Despite the advice of his generals and the warnings of his diplomats, he had entered into a game that he did not have five chances in a hundred of bringing successfully to an end. And yet he had prevailed all along the line.

— Well then, gentlemen generals, he said to the chiefs of the Wehrmacht, which of us was right? You were wrong to be pessimistic. I had told you clearly that France would not move...

Against all probability, his prediction had been realized. As a result, his collaborators became more circumspect. Henceforth they would look twice before contradicting him. Before the infallible certainty that animated him, they began to distrust their own judgment.

Hitler, for his part, freed himself more and more from the influence of his advisers. Why should he listen to men whose eyes seemed clouded by the memories of defeat?

— Your way of maneuvering in 1914, he remarked sarcastically to the directors of the Wilhelmstrasse, was not exactly a masterpiece of perspicacity either...

Goebbels was immediately charged with organizing a referendum to ask the German people “whether it approved the work accomplished by the Reichsführer over the last three years.” Posed in these terms, the answer could not be in doubt.

The vote took place on March 29. 44,411,911 votes — that is, 99 percent of all voters — answered “yes” to Hitler. It was the strongest majority he had ever obtained.

On April 20, 1936, the Führer’s forty-seventh birthday, he raised General von Blomberg to the dignity of Field Marshal. On the same day, General von Fritsch, commander in chief of the army, was promoted to the rank of Colonel-General.

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1. “Counsellor of Embassy Forster had been sent expressly to Paris, on the eve of the reoccupation, to gather information on the possible attitude of the French. He had assured in his report that they would react violently. When his prediction was not realized, he was naturally sidelined. The absence of any reaction, following the remilitarization of the Rhineland, increased Hitler’s prestige to the same extent that it diminished the credit of those who had overestimated the resolution of France and England.” (Paul Schmidt, *op. cit.*, p. 93.)

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These two men had been opposed to the remilitarization of the Rhineland. Yet the Chancellor rewarded them as if they had just won a personal victory. They knew that Hitler no longer had the same confidence in them. They nevertheless accepted the distinction he conferred upon them. Could they leave on the pretext that the operation had been crowned with success? Obviously not. They would discredit themselves and would deal a perceptible blow to the prestige of the army. Better that no one should know that the Führer’s decision had been taken against their most formal recommendations...

And in fact, the people knew nothing of these divergences of opinion. They saw only the results: on March 16, 1935, the Führer had restored to Germany her freedom of military action. On March 7, 1936, he had restored her military sovereignty over the whole territory of the Reich. That was enough to justify their enthusiastic approval.

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XV

THE OLYMPIC YEAR (1936)

The rest of the year was filled by an uninterrupted series of festivities and receptions, of which the Olympic Games were the most striking event. For everyone, it was a period of respite and relaxation. “In the history of the Nazi regime,” François-Poncet writes, “the celebration of the Olympic Games in Berlin, in August 1936, marks a high moment, a kind of culminating point, if not an apotheosis for Hitler and the Third Reich. In certain respects, it evokes the memory of the Napoleonic days of Erfurt in 1808. Weary of the emotions that, following the occupation of the Rhineland, had made them fear

that they would again be swept away into the turmoil of a general conflagration, minds yielded to the impression that a nightmare had dissipated, to the hope that better times were announcing themselves, within a peace that would no longer be troubled, since Germany had realized her avowed design, which was to free herself from the chains of Versailles.

“Hitler has imposed himself on Europe as an extraordinary figure,” continues the former ambassador of France in Berlin. “He does not spread only fear or aversion; he excites curiosity; he awakens sympathies; his prestige grows; the force of attraction that emanates from him operates beyond the boundaries of his country. Kings, princes, illustrious guests press into the capital of the Reich, perhaps less to attend the sporting contests that are to take place there than to approach the fateful man who seems to hold in his hands the destiny of the continent, to see close up this Germany that he has, under his irresistible grip, transformed and galvanized. And everyone, in

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the face of an organization without gaps, an order and discipline without cracks, a prodigality without limits, everyone goes into raptures.

“In fact, the picture is magnificent. The Nazis, from their arrival in power, prepared for the due date of these festivities. They built, at the gates of Berlin, in the western suburbs, scattered with lakes and forests, a gigantic stadium that holds one hundred thousand spectators and in which the reddish brown of the track sand, the brilliant green of the lawn, the tender gray of the walls and stands compose a harmony of colors that seduces the eyes.”

The inauguration ceremony, which took place on August 1, 1936, offered those present an incomparable spectacle. In the official stand had taken their places, around the Führer-Chancellor, King Boris of Bulgaria, the son of Admiral Horthy, regent of Hungary, the Prince of Piedmont and Princess Marie-José of Savoy, the crown princes of Greece, Sweden, and Japan, the two sons of Mussolini, and a host of distinguished guests, among whom one recognized Lord Hamilton, Lord Londonderry, and a large number of representatives of the Spanish, Italian, Dutch, and Scandinavian aristocracy.

The sporting competitions served as the pretext for splendid festivities “that plunged the guests of honor, the diplomats, the notable personalities, who had come from all points of the universe, into astonishment and admiration. Hitler received at his table Majesties and Royal Highnesses. Goebbels offered a supper and a night fête for a thousand persons on the lawns of Peacock Island. As it had rained during the day, aircraft had been sent in all directions to fetch new material. The trees had become luminous candelabra. The pontoons of the Reichswehr had thrown a boat bridge to connect the island to the mainland and formed a guard of honor, oar raised, as the guests passed; they were welcomed and led to their places by a swarm of young girls, dressed as Renaissance pages. At midnight, a formidable fireworks display... launched into the air its crackling rockets.

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1. And not only a stadium, or Reichssportfeld, but a vast maneuver ground, or Maifeld, bordered by high stands surmounted by a tall square granite tower, an open-air statue dedicated to Dietrich Eckart, a Sports Academy, an aquatic stadium, a “sports forum,” a hospital, a station, and several restaurants.

“For his part, Goering had caused a whole eighteenth-century village in miniature to grow in the gardens of his ministry, with its inn, its post office, its bakery, its craftsmen’s shops... At the Berlin Opera, entirely newly hung with cream satin, he had also organized a sumptuous dinner, followed by a ball. A floor joined the stage to the auditorium; a profusion of lackeys in red livery and powdered wigs, raising high lanterns at the ends of long poles, marked out paths amid the tables where a multitude of uniforms, embroidered coats, and women in full dress swarmed. The whole General Staff of the regime was there, glittering, radiant, eager, while the accents of the orchestra filled the vast nave...”

They dined, they danced, they exchanged toasts; conversations were struck up in every language, putting M. Schmidt, the official interpreter, to a hard test. “Ah, Monsieur Schmidt, help me for a moment, I should like to speak to Lord Londonderry!” — “Monsieur Schmidt, just two words with Dr. Goebbels.” — “Mr. Schmidt, do you know where Goering is?”

All thoughts naturally gravitated around Hitler, this extraordinary figure without whom all these fêtes would never have taken place. What a path he had traveled since the time when, as a vagabond lost in the underworld of Vienna, workers threatened to throw him from the top of the scaffolding on which he was working! What he had accomplished lay exposed in broad daylight. But what would he do tomorrow? That was what everyone asked himself, for, despite his professions of faith, the man remained enigmatic and difficult to decipher.

“I personally knew three faces of him, corresponding to three aspects of his nature,” writes François-Poncet, who saw him often. “The first was pallid; his soft features, his muddied complexion, his vague, globular eyes, lost in a dream, gave him an absent, distant air: a cloudy and troubling face of a medium or sleepwalker.

“The second was animated, colored, transported by passion; the nostrils quivered, the eyes flashed lightning; it expressed violence, the appetite for domination, impatience with every constraint, hatred of the adversary, cynical audacity,

a fierce energy ready to overturn everything; a face of ‘storm and assault,’ a face of a frenzied man.

“The third was that of an ordinary man, naive, rustic, thick, vulgar, easily amused, laughing with a heavy, noisy laugh, accompanied by broad slaps on the thigh: a banal face, without marked character, like thousands of faces spread over the vast earth.

“When one conversed with Hitler, one sometimes saw these three faces succeed one another.

“At the beginning of the interview, he seemed not to listen, not to understand; he remained indifferent and as if amorphous. One had before oneself the man who remained for whole hours absorbed in a strange contemplation and who, after midnight, when his companions had withdrawn, fell back into a long solitary meditation; the chief whose lieutenants reproached him for his indecision, his weakness,

his wavering... And then, all at once, as if a hand had pressed a trigger, he launched into an impetuous speech; he spoke in a high, exalted, angry tone; the argumentation rushed forward, abundant, stinging, driven onward by a hoarse voice that rolled the r's and whose stony accent was that of a mountaineer from the Tyrol; he thundered, he roared, as if he were addressing thousands of listeners. It was the orator emerging, the great orator of the Latin tradition, the tribune full of pectus, using instinctively all the tricks of eloquence, excellent above all in caustic irony and invective, an apparition all the more striking for German crowds because they were less accustomed to it...

“When Hitler spoke thus, one could not think of interrupting him or protesting. He would have blasted the imprudent man who had risked it... This lasted one, two, or three quarters of an hour. And suddenly, the flow stopped. Hitler fell silent; he seemed exhausted; one would have said he had emptied his accumulators... That was the moment to present objections, to contradict him, to put forward another thesis. For then he no longer became indignant, he hesitated, he asked to reflect, he postponed. And if, at that instant, one could find a word that touched him, a joke that finished relaxing him, the heavy folds that barred his forehead vanished, his somber expression lit up with a smile...

“One would be mistaken, nevertheless, if one thought that this visionary

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did not have the sense of real life. He was very coldly realistic and very profoundly calculating... At the service of his will to power, he placed formidable resources of mind: an extraordinary obstinacy, an unbridled audacity, a sudden and implacable power of decision, a penetrating glance, an intuition that warned him of dangers and allowed him, more than once, to escape the plots woven against him. He was connected to his people as if by antennae, which informed him of what the crowd desired or feared, approved or blamed, believed or did not believe...”

Let us add one more important trait, in which Robert Ingrim sees the touchstone of every great political leader: an exceptional capacity in the art of provoking crises, of dramatizing situations.

All the foreign visitors whom the Olympics had drawn to Garmisch or to Berlin strove to establish direct contacts with the master of the Third Reich; and Hitler, so often inaccessible or abrupt, received them with good grace, sometimes at the Chancellery, sometimes in his Alpine domain of Berchtesgaden.

Already, in the month of February, Lord Londonderry had had a long interview with him, during which the Führer showed himself particularly considerate. The conversation had as its principal theme the absurdity of a new war between Great Britain and the Reich, and the immense advantages that the two countries would gain from walking hand in hand.

— How many times during the war, Hitler declared, when

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2. “International relations are not gentle, but harsh. So long as a people bears its fate, that fate appears tolerable to others. Nothing has ever been changed by a sweet reasonableness, as the English say. One may deplore it, but so it is. Whoever wishes to modify a situation must provoke a crisis. One could

almost say that politics is the art of dramatizing things. Whoever is incapable of this is worthless as a leader of the state... Hitler possessed this gift to the supreme degree, whereas the leaders of the Weimar Republic had never known how to do it.” (Robert Ingrim, *Hitler’s glücklichster Tag*, p. 59.)

3. Garmisch-Partenkirchen, in the Bavarian Alps, had already seen the Winter Olympic Games take place there in February 1936.

4. A few days earlier, during an interview at Karinhall, Goering had said to Lord Londonderry: “If England and Germany walked hand in hand, no power in the world would be capable of resisting them.” Londonderry had answered him more modestly: “Let us begin by strengthening confidence in the world.” (Paul Schmidt, *Statist auf Diplomatischer Bühne*, p. 334.)

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I was a simple soldier and found myself in the trenches facing English troops, did I say to myself that it was madness to confront, weapons in hand, men who could belong to the same people as mine! Such a conflict must never be renewed...

Lord Londonderry left the Chancellery visibly impressed. But this visit was not the only one. It was followed, shortly thereafter, by those of the governor of the Bank of France, M. Labeyrie, and the French Minister of Commerce, M. Bastide. Soon it would be the turn of M. Lansbury, one of the leaders of the British Labour Party, of Sir Robert Vansittart, Permanent Under-Secretary of the Foreign Office, and of the Duke and Duchess of Windsor.

But the most significant meeting of that year was incontestably that of Hitler and Lloyd George, which took place at the beginning of September at the Obersalzberg.

— I rejoice particularly to welcome into my house the man whom we have always considered in Germany as the true victor of the World War, Hitler said to his visitor.

— And I, answered the former British Prime Minister, am happy to find myself before the man who, after the defeat, has gathered the whole German people behind him and has been the artisan of its resurrection.

The conference, which gathered around a low table Hitler, Ribbentrop, and the former signatory of the Treaty of Versailles, lasted the whole day. When it ended, and Lloyd George returned to Berchtesgaden, he was welcomed on the threshold of his hotel by his daughter, who saluted him with her arm extended and said to him, laughing:

— Heil Hitler!

Then the face of the former British Prime Minister assumed

[Retained footnotes]

1. Id., op. cit., p. 335–336.

2. “Londonderry listened to everything [Hitler told him] with a friendly and sympathetic interest,” writes Paul Schmidt, who attended the interview as interpreter, “striving, as if by feeling his way, to find formulas as convincing as possible to make him understand that his desires were oriented in the same direction as his own. The words, in part full of fire, which Hitler had used to characterize Anglo-German relations, had visibly impressed Londonderry. Once more I was able to observe how foreign visitors came under Hitler’s grip in the course of conversations of this kind.” (Statist auf Diplomatischer Bühne, p. 336.)

3. Name of Hitler’s property, situated above the little town of Berchtesgaden.

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a grave expression, and it was in a measured voice that he answered his daughter:

— Perfectly: Heil Hitler! I say it too, for the leader of the Third Reich is truly a great man...

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After this succession of tributes and festivities, is it necessary to be astonished if the Nuremberg Congress of September 1936 took on unsurpassed brilliance? These general assizes of the Party had taken on, year after year, ever-increasing scope. The first had taken place in Munich on January 21, 1921, under a misty and somber sky, in the presence of a few hundred spectators. Since then, the great annual gathering had been moved to the end of the summer and transferred to the Luitpoldshain at Nuremberg, where gigantic installations had been executed for that purpose. Congress of Victory after the taking of power in 1933; Congress of the Triumph of the Will after the Night of the Long Knives of 1934; Congress of Freedom after the reestablishment of military service in 1935 — they caused ever denser crowds, eventually exceeding a million and a half individuals, to flow through the old imperial city. Hitler Youth, rolling their great drums; battalions of the Labor Service, carrying their symbolic spades on the left shoulder; Storm Detachments in brown shirts; Protection Echelons in black tunics; elements of the Motorized Corps, to which, starting in 1935, formations of infantry, artillery, and tanks of the new Wehrmacht had been added — all marched there in tight ranks before a crowd with outstretched arms, delirious with enthusiasm. So that in the end, what one saw at Nuremberg was no longer the Party: it was the entire German nation offering itself the spectacle of its recovered strength.

What took place on the immense open ground of the Zeppelinwiese is difficult to define, for it was much more than an examination of the work accomplished during the year just past. What was being forged there was a mystique powerful enough to triumph over individual feelings and cast them into the crucible of a single faith.

It was at Nuremberg that Goebbels, this magician of propaganda,

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gave the full measure of his talents as organizer and director. For it was not enough that four thousand special trains should disgorge at the appointed moment a million and a half participants. It was also

necessary for each of them to be lodged and fed for the duration of the Congress; that he should immediately find the tent assigned to him in the immense canvas encampment erected around the city; that he should finally receive precise directives indicating to him, hour by hour and minute by minute, the place to which he must go and what was expected of him. All this had to be carried out with mathematical rigor, leaving no place for individual initiative.

But this impeccable organization, in which every German rediscovered the order and efficiency that had been so lacking to him during the long period of troubles he had just traversed, was only the preliminary condition for the magical ceremony that would tear him away from himself and drown his personal reactions in a surge of collective emotions that a learned gradation would carry to their paroxysm. This partook at once of hypnosis and of bewitchment. Here again, nothing had been neglected to obtain the desired effect. A parade of one hundred thousand S.A. men hammering the paving stones of the city for five hours; a forest of standards in which the blood-red emblems and the eagles of the Party dominated; deafening fanfares; artillery salvos; torchlight retreats unrolling their serpent of fire between the illuminated façades of the medieval city; batteries of searchlights aimed at the sky and weaving an incandescent vault above the arena of the Luitpoldshain — everything contributed to creating an impression of ordered power from which the most skeptical visitors returned stupefied. It was impossible to resist this whirlwind of colors, songs, and lights whose intensity no report, no film, would ever render.

For nearly a week, the crowd was churned and rolled in a tidal wave of emotions. Day of Youth,

[Retained footnotes]

1. “Besides the fact that our Congress constituted an event in the life of the Party,” Hitler would later say, “it represented a whole sum of useful experiences even with a view to war. From the simple point of view of transport, indeed, no fewer than 4,000 special trains were necessary to bring the congress participants from the various parts of Germany. The tens of thousands of wagons that waited were echeloned on the tracks as far as Halle and as far as Munich. What preparation for possible troop transports, for the Railway Directorate!” (Libres Propos, II, p. 199–200.)

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Day of Labor, Day of the Party, Day of the Army caused a succession of images representing the new State that was being built to pass before its eyes.

Finally, when enthusiasm reached almost to ecstasy, the political leaders mounted the stone tribune that unfolded like an altar facing the assembly. So vast was the space separating them from the crowd that they seemed no larger than insects. But the loudspeakers that diffused their speeches conferred on their voices a superhuman amplitude. In the general blaze of the closing ceremony, they took on the appearance of demiurges celebrating an unknown cult that associated the splendors of ancient Sparta with the blaze of a new Valhalla.

*

Each Congress had its theme. That of the preceding year had been placed under the sign of Blood and Race. Three laws had been promulgated there by the Reichstag, which sat at Nuremberg for the

duration of the gathering.

The first concerned the flag of the Reich; the second, German nationality; the third, called the Law for the Protection of German Blood and German Honor, had much more dramatic repercussions. Here is the text:

Preamble.

Convinced that the purity of German blood is the essential condition for the survival of the German people, and animated by

[Retained footnotes]

1. Reichsflaggengesetz:

Art. I: The colors of the Reich are black-white-red.

Art. II: The swastika flag is the national emblem of the Reich. It is also the flag of the merchant marine.

The red war standard, barred by a black cross, bearing the swastika at the center and the Iron Cross in the upper left corner, was handed to the unit commanders on November 7, 1935, in the course of a special ceremony.

2. Reichsangehörigkeitsgesetz:

Art. I: Whoever forms part of the Association for the Protection of the German Reich (Schutzverband des Deutschen Reiches) enjoys German nationality.

Art. II: Only he who possesses German nationality or who is of related blood and who proves by his conduct or his aptitudes his will to serve faithfully the Reich and the German people is a citizen of the Reich.

Art. III: Only he who is a German citizen enjoys the fullness of political rights, as they are defined by law.

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the unshakable will to ensure the permanence of the Germanic Nation, the Reichstag has unanimously adopted the following law:

Art. 1. Marriages between Jews and German citizens or individuals of related blood are prohibited. Marriages contracted abroad with the aim of evading this law are null and void. The introduction of the action for annulment falls to the Public Prosecutor.

Art. 2. Extramarital relations between Jews and German citizens or individuals of related blood are prohibited.

Art. 3. Jews are not authorized to employ as domestic servants German female citizens or women of related blood under the age of forty-five years.

Art. 4. Jews are forbidden to display the German colors or to hoist the national flag of the Reich. They have the right, on the other hand, to hoist the Jewish colors. The exercise of this right is placed under the protection of the State.

Art. 5. Any infraction of Article 1 of the present law is punished by hard labor; any infraction of Article 2 is punished by hard labor or imprisonment; any infraction of Articles 3 and 4 is punished by a prison sentence that may extend to one year and by a fine, or by one or the other of these two penalties.

Art. 6. The application of the present law falls to the Minister of the Interior, in agreement with the representative of the Führer and the Minister of Justice.

Art. 7. This law enters into force on the day following its promulgation, with the exception of Article 3, which will enter into force only on January 1, 1936.

Nuremberg, September 15, 1935.

This law, which would soon be followed by a host of other prohibitions, tended to exclude the Jews from the German nation in order to make of them a distinct entity — necessarily an enemy. It would turn against the Reich not only all the émigrés of the regime, but all the Israelite communities scattered throughout the world, who would see in this will to implacable segregation a return to the ghettos of the Middle Ages and the equivalent of a declaration of war.

The Nuremberg Congresses were songs of triumph. But amid their surge of joy and lights, they bore in their depths this source of darkness,

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which would end by covering everything...

*

If the Congress of 1935 had been placed under the sign of Blood and Race, that of 1936 — or Congress of Honor — was dominated by the Soviet menace. This was the hour when the Popular Front had just come to power in France and when civil war was bloodying Spain.

On September 9, the opening day of the Congress, Rudolf Hess delivered the inaugural speech and from the outset placed the manifestation under the sign of the anti-Communist struggle:

— If Bolshevism had triumphed in Germany, he said amid thunderous applause, the organized destruction of culture would extend from the Pacific to the Atlantic and to the Mediterranean. Thanks to National Socialism, things have taken another course. Instead of being, for Bolshevism, a factor of penetration toward Western Europe, Germany today is a powerful anti-Bolshevik rampart, raised in the heart of the continent.

“We know that tomorrow, as yesterday, Bolshevism will continue to strive toward the goal it has never ceased to proclaim: world revolution. For years National Socialism has raised its voice to denounce the peril! Today, its warnings are confirmed by the frightful blaze of Spain in flames.

“Yesterday, such horrors could have unfolded among us. Today, thanks be to God, they have become impossible. That is why Germany appears at this Congress as a factor of security and peace. But we have the duty to remain vigilant, for the anti-Bolshevik struggle is only beginning.

“Our Führer is not one of those who do things by halves! Since a world in arms has forced us to rearm, we shall rearm to the end. For every additional cannon, every additional tank, every additional aircraft increases the peace of mind of German mothers. They bring them the certainty that their children will not be massacred in a disastrous war, nor tortured by Bolshevik hordes. We shall act so that these hordes lose all desire to attack us.

“The stronger the Party is, the more powerful will be our ideological means of defense! The stronger the Army is, the more irresistible will be our material means of defense!”

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This speech, which addressed foreign countries over the heads of the congress participants, contained both a warning and a threat. But his listeners had no time to notice it, for here was Hitler himself mounting the tribune to draw up the balance sheet of the work accomplished since his accession to power:

— How our enemies would have mocked us, he declared in a vibrant voice, if I had told them on January 30, 1933, that after four years the number of German unemployed would have fallen to less than a million;

“That the forced expropriation of our peasants would have ceased;

“That the receipts of our agriculture would be higher than in any preceding year of peace;

“That our annual national income would have risen from 41 to 56 billion marks;

“That the German bourgeoisie and handicrafts would know an unsuspected expansion;

“That our commerce would be reborn;

“That our ports would no longer be cemeteries of ships, and that in 1936, in German shipyards alone, 640,000 tons of new ships would be under construction;

“That innumerable factories would not only have doubled, but tripled and quadrupled the volume of their production, and that many new factories would have been built;

“That the Krupp establishments would be filled by the roar of rolling mills and steam hammers;

“And that in all these enterprises, the principal motor of the effort would not be the unscrupulous gain

of the individual, but the devotion of all to the good of the nation;

“That the automobile factories would not merely emerge from their lethargy, but would expand in a dizzying fashion; that the production of cars, which was 45,000

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in 1932, would rise to 250,000 in 1936;

“That in four years, the deficit of the Länder and municipalities would be made up, and that the excess of tax receipts would annually reach 5 billion marks;

“That our railways would know sound management and that our trains would be the fastest in the world;

“That the German Reich would be endowed with a network of roads whose grandeur and beauty would surpass everything that has been built in this kind since the origins of civilization; that of the 7,000 kilometers of roads projected, scarcely four years later 1,000 kilometers would already be open to traffic and more than 4,000 under construction;

“That entire workers’ housing estates, containing hundreds of thousands of new houses, would spring from the earth;

“That hundreds and hundreds of new bridges would span valleys and rivers;

“That German theater and music would celebrate a resurrection worthy of the immortal masterpieces of our past;

“That the whole German people would participate in this prodigious spiritual renewal;

“And that all this would be accomplished without a single Jew having taken part in the direction of the nation!

“Yes, I repeat it: what would our enemies have answered if I had told them that all this would be realized in less than four years?

“Yet today, all this is accomplished, and you have only to look around you to convince yourselves of it!”

Goebbels, Alfred Rosenberg, Dr. Ley, chief of the Labor Front, and Walther Darré, Minister of Agriculture, delivered in the following days speeches that were, on the whole, a passionate indictment against the leaders of the Kremlin. Finally, on September 15, Day of the Wehrmacht, Hitler reviewed the troops of the 17th Infantry Division and slowly climbed the steps of the high stone platform, at the foot of which a forest of standards unfolded.

— What would have happened, he said in a strong voice, if in 1919 an unknown soldier of the Great War had not risen to save our fatherland? Only a burning faith made this miracle possible. Today, it is

an exaltant spectacle to see our people marching in close columns in the Party and in the Army. But it is also a reassuring spectacle, for what is passing before us are not lifeless organizations, but formations animated by an indestructible faith.

“Today,” he continued, hammering each word,

“we no longer fear a Bolshevik invasion. Not that we do not believe in it, but because we are resolved to repel with the fiercest energy every attack coming from without, just as National Socialism has swept away within that eternal ferment of hatred and subversion. And the more the sky around us is tinged with the rising redness of world revolution, the more National Socialist Germany will turn with love and devotion toward its Army, to which we owe the greatest and proudest

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of traditions! Bolshevism must know it today: a powerful army stands at the gates of Germany!”

This was not yet entirely true, but it soon would be, for thanks to the frenzied pace imposed by Hitler, the reconstruction of the Army was already very advanced. Germany had recovered her military freedom and had restored her sovereignty over the whole of her territory. The regiments of the Wehrmacht mounted guard on the Rhine and in the Saar, as on all the other frontiers, to the west, to the south, and to the east of the country.

Two months later, that is to say on November 8, the thirteenth anniversary of the Munich putsch, Hitler went to the Bürgerbräu, where all the militants of the first hour were gathered. The speech he delivered to them, although addressed to a more restricted audience than that of Nuremberg, was no less significant:

— We all came out of the old Imperial Army, he said in his peroration. It was as soldiers that we began the struggle against the Marxist revolution, and it is as politicians that we shall finish it!

“In all the work that I have accomplished, what I am perhaps proudest of, and what posterity will be most grateful to me for, is not only that I did not destroy the Reichswehr of one hundred thousand men, as certain ill-advised minds counselled me to do, but that I made of it, in less than four years, the cadre of a new German people’s army, with which all those may collaborate who, without that, might perhaps have become our enemies.

“When my trial ended in 1924, I predicted that the hour would come when the two adversary formations would merge into one.

“Today, that prediction has been realized.”

“Gibt mir vier Jahre Zeit!” — “Give me a period of four years!” Hitler had asked the German people on January 30, 1933.

On January 30, 1937, those four years had elapsed. On that day, the Führer assembled the Reichstag to celebrate the fifth anniversary of the taking of power. What would he say to the deputies? In general, his speeches were long. This one would be much briefer than usual. The essence of his declaration —

which he pronounced in a very relaxed tone — consisted

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in these few lines:

— I solemnly withdraw, as of this day, the signature affixed by Germany at the bottom of the document specifying that she bore responsibility for the war [of 1914], for that signature was extorted by force from a powerless government...

By these few words, Articles 227 to 231 of the Treaty of Versailles were torn up in their turn. That seemed to be little. In reality, it was enormous. For Germany's recognition of her guilt was the keystone and the justification of the whole edifice.

Since 1919, all the governments that had presided over Germany's destinies had never ceased to protest against these provisions of the Treaty. Even before it was signed, Ebert and Scheidemann had tried to obtain their suppression, but their request had not even been examined by the Allies. On August 28, 1924, Chancellor Marx tried to have them annulled, but his demand raised a storm of protests in London and Paris. In August 1925, shortly before the conclusion of the Treaty of Locarno, Stresemann renewed this attempt in a note addressed to the Quai d'Orsay and Downing Street. France returned his memorandum to him without reading it. As for England, she rejected it in a curt tone. In June 1932, at the Lausanne Conference, von Papen proposed to pay two billion marks as a global settlement for the remainder of Reparations, in exchange for annulment of the articles of the Treaty relating to Germany's guilt. But he was no more fortunate than his predecessors: his offer encountered the veto of Édouard Herriot.

This time, no one raised the slightest protest. Eighteen years had passed since 1919, and the Treaty of Versailles was so dismantled that Hitler's declaration no longer had anything but a symbolic value. At most, a few journalists complained that the Reich "had once again indulged in a unilateral act." But who could maintain, in good faith, that those articles had been signed by common accord?

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In pronouncing these words, Hitler knew that he risked nothing. The Treaty of Versailles was dead and no one dreamed of resurrecting it. He nevertheless concluded his speech with this phrase, which intended to be reassuring, and which he let fall from his lips with a condescending smile:

— To the declaration I have just made, I wish to add another: the era of surprises is henceforth over.

Did Hitler truly believe it? In that case he was mistaken.

For for the whole world — as for himself — the era of surprises was beginning.

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O. Lepaje, Cartographer

Territorial distribution of the Wehrkreise in the National Wehrmacht

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LEGEND

State boundaries

Boundaries of the Wehrkreise

Numbers of the Wehrkreise

Seats of the Gruppenkommandos

Seats of the Wehrkreis commands

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NATIONAL WEHRMACHT (situation as of December 31, 1937).

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